



Wrestling with the “fallacious doctrine of racial superiority”: The Discursive Construction of “Race” in American Bahá’í Periodicals

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Wrestling with the “fallacious doctrine of racial superiority”: The Discursive Construction of
“Race” in American Bahá’í Periodicals”

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for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

American Bahá'í periodicals have said much about race and racial prejudice. This thesis brings to light the variations of that discourse to provide insight on how American Bahá'ís understood these concepts in relation to the burgeoning religious faith and societal changes. The data comes from four American Bahá'í periodicals: *Bahai Bulletin* (1908-1909), *Star of the West* (1910-1935), *World Unity Magazine* (1927-1935), and *World Order* (1935-1949, 1966-1990, 1993-2007). By employing a social constructionist approach, findings indicate substantial variation in how race and racial prejudice was conceived and deployed. Before World War II, there was concentrated focus on “race amity,” individual prejudice, the nature of “race”, and a highly variant reliance on, or dismissal of, science as a proper mode of understanding both race and prejudice. In the wake of the war, amplified emphasis on spirituality as the sole solution to racial conflict, coupled with apocalyptic warnings about American racial hostilities after the Civil Rights movement, were both met with an increased focus on “culture,” “color-blindness,” and debates over how to engage the “the most challenging issue” of racial prejudice. By the 1990s and 2000s, there emerged a bifurcated focus on individual Bahá'í heroes of the past alongside attention to institutional and structural racism, which culminated in discussion of racial integration in the U.S. These findings indicate the need for additional study of this discourse as a mine rich in social and historical insights about the strategies, relationships, and emphases placed on religion, science, individuals, structure, and more in the development of American Bahá'í religious life and its discursive articulation.

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis, first, to my wife and partner, Menaka Kannan. Thank you for providing a critical eye, a listening ear, and a discerning voice toward the refinement of this project. I also devote this work to Shoghí Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and author of the 1938 letter to the Bahá'ís of North America, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, from which the title of this thesis draws.

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Chapter I.

Introduction: “Race” and the American Bahá’í Community

In December 1938, the then leader of Bahá’í Faith, Shoghí Effendi (1897-1957), instructed American Bahá’ís to immediately cast away “once and for all the fallacious doctrine of racial superiority, with all its attendant evils, confusion, and miseries” (1938, 2). The message landed on receptive ears; many American Bahá’ís were already wrestling with the social meanings, implications, and debates surrounding the concept of “race” and related matters of racial inequality, prejudice, discrimination, and racism. For example, nearly ten years earlier in 1929, an African American Bahá’í named Louis Gregory opined in the Bahá’í periodical *The Star of the West*, that there is “one humanity and the equality of the races” (Gregory 1929a, 367) before his citation of sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois’s claim that “there are no ‘races’ in any exact scientific sense; that no measurements of human beings, of bodily development of head form, or color and hair, of physiological reactions, have succeeded in dividing mankind into different recognizable groups” (Gregory 1929a, 369). Gregory offered a robust social constructionist stance that was portrayed as hand-in-glove with Bahá’í theological renderings of race as a superficial partitioning of God’s human family. Yet, there were also deviations from Gregory’s stance within Bahá’í discourse. For instance, only a decade later in 1939—and just one year removed from Shoghí Effendi’s directive—Stanwood Cobb published an essay entitled “Chinese Proverbs and Maxims” in *World Order*, another periodical of the American Bahá’í community. Cobb, then co-editor

(with Horace Holley) of *World Order*, took license to present a rather exoticizing essay on “Chinese temperament” that differed from the attitudes of the “Occidentals who have lived among the Chinese for some length of time” (Cobb 1939, 402):

The Chinese temperament does not run strongly to religion, especially in its other worldly aspect. The existence and nature of the soul, its condition in the after life, the concept of sin, the existence and nature of deity,—these things do not enter into the Chinese mentality, nor have they been given to Chinese people by their sages There is very little exhortation and no vehement excoriations such as characterize the Hebrew writers. (Cobb 1939, 402)

While Cobb’s example is cultural, his use of innate qualities and characteristics—coupled with his differentiation of the Chinese from both “Occidentals” (an antonym for “Oriental” which primarily was used in reference to Anglo Saxon or “White” Westerners), “Hebrew writers” (with a less-than subtle nod toward anti-Semitic stereotypes of polemic and critical Jewish exegetics), and his emphasis that despite Occidentals’ long exposure to Chinese culture failed to alter Occidental mindsets—pushes his commentary well into racialism.

How does one reconcile such contradictory stances on race, both written in media outlets sanctioned by American Bahá’í ecclesiastical authorities? While these could have been simple individual interpretations that either aligned or deviated from Bahá’í Scriptural teachings about race, it is important to map the full landscape of such discourse. Accordingly, there is much to gain from a critical cartography of how Bahá’í discourse intersected with the changing meanings of race circulating in American society.

The Bahá’í Faith was established in 1863 in Persia (modern day Iran and Iraq). A monotheistic religion in the Abrahamic tradition, there are many Bahá’í teachings on social and spiritual issues, from the independent investigation of truth and the harmony of science and religion to the equality of men and women and the abolition of racial

prejudice. As a religious faith wedded to scientific investigation, there exist many Bahá'í Scriptural pronouncements about the materialist and spiritual truth of humanity's fundamental equality and unity, particularly as pertains to the elimination of racial prejudice, the abolition of racial segregation, and the rejection of doctrines of ethnic and racial superiority (Taylor 1988; Buck 2011, 2012; Venters 2015; Hughey 2017; Bramson 2018; Smith 2019). For instance, in a Chicago speech in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated:

One of the important questions which affect the unity and the solidarity of mankind is the fellowship and equality of the white and colored races A single point of distinction exists—that of racial color. God is not pleased with—neither should any reasonable or intelligent man be willing to recognize—inequality in the races because of this distinction. ('Abdu'l-Bahá 1982, 65)

Moreover, in 1938 Shoghi Effendi wrote that American Bahá'ís must become “a fraternity freed from that cancerous growth of racial prejudice, which is eating into the vitals of an already debilitated society” (Effendi 1938b, 23). He continued to explain that the abolition of racial prejudice should be the hallmark of every Bahá'í:

Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its forms, should 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. It should, above all else, become the keynote of the policy of that august body which, in its capacity as the national representative, and the director and coordinator of the affairs of the community, must set the example, and facilitate the application of such a vital principle to the lives and activities of those whose interests it safeguards and represents. (Effendi 1938b, 36-37)

And as recently as a 2020 letter to the Bahá'ís of the United States, the Universal House of Justice (the governing body of the Bahá'í world) urged “the American people” to become free “from the pernicious effects of racial prejudice” while reiterating the efforts needed to dislodge “racism” from both society and the growing Bahá'í community:

Racism is a profound deviation from the standard of true morality It must be supplanted by the establishment of just relationships among individuals, communities, and institutions of society that will uplift all and will not designate anyone as “other”. The change required is not merely social and economic, but above all moral and spiritual It is not possible for you to effect the transformation envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh merely by adopting the perspectives, practices, concepts, criticisms, and language of contemporary society. Your approach, instead, will be distinguished by maintaining a humble posture of learning, weighing alternatives in the light of His teachings, consulting to harmonize differing views and shape collective action, and marching forward with unbreakable unity in serried lines. (Universal House of Justice 2020)

Such a commitment to transform “individuals, communities, and institutions” in the U.S. is to encompass matters both material and spiritual. Moreover, this endeavor is to proceed harmoniously and humbly, situated as it is within the multiculturalism of not only the U.S. but within the larger diversity of the planet in consort with the global vision of the Universal House of Justice. Such an orientation makes of Bahá'ís, as the social scientist Michael McMullen wrote, “a sociologically interesting group” because they “consciously use ideological and organizational mechanisms to link the local and global levels of social, political, and cultural life” (2000, 4). This is particularly the case for what McMullen (2000, 4) identifies as “the Bahá'í vision of future global religious, ethnic, racial, and national harmony.” Accordingly, Bahá'í newspapers and magazines emerged as a key site for the discussion of the local and global complexities of racial dynamics. Such discourse is especially witnessed within American Bahá'í periodicals.

The proto-genesis of Bahá'í Faith in the United States remains indebted to periodicals. The forerunner to the Bahá'í Faith, the Bábí Faith, was first mentioned in U.S. newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century. For instance, an article entitled “A Modern Mahomet” appeared in an April 1846 edition of the Missouri-based *Boon Lick Times* (“Mahomet” was a common mis-spelling and “Orientalist” rendering of the Prophet-Founder of Islam, Muhammad). Five years later, in June 1851, the Vermont-based paper *Green Mountain Freeman* published a story about the Bábí Faith entitled “A New Prophet” (Wright 1851, 1). It would be four decades after these Occidental publications first brought printed word of a newly-established religion from Persia that the arrival of Bahá'í practitioners would systematically herald the teachings of a novel faith personally. The first documented Bahá'í to arrive in the United States was Anton Haddad. Haddad emigrated from Cairo via Alexandria and landed in New York City in the summer of 1892. The second Bahá'í, Haddad's colleague Ibrahim George Kheiralla, arrived in the U.S. in the fall of 1892. Haddad remained in New York City while Kheiralla moved to Chicago (Stockman 1994).

The germinal story of the Bahá'í Faith in the United States thus began as a tale of two cities. New York and Chicago served as the metropolitan backgrounds for the first American Bahá'í communities. In distinction to the earlier printed announcements of the Bahá'í Faith in the U.S., the first documented oral proclamation of the Bahá'í Faith in the U.S. occurred in Chicago in 1893. Reverend Henry Harris Jessup, a Presbyterian missionary who had prior traveled to Syria, mentioned the Bahá'í Faith in his address to the 1893 World Parliament of Religions (Jessup 1893, 2). Soon thereafter, a national administrative Bahá'í community began to take shape. In New York City, where the

fledgling religious group first formed an administrative body in December 1900, they eight years later produced the first national periodical entitled *Bahai Bulletin* (1908-1909). After two years, publication of *Bahai Bulletin* ceased and the Bahá'ís of Chicago (where the national Bahá'í administrative center had been recently re-located) began to publish *Star of the West* (1910-1935). In the 1920s, the Bahá'í-affiliated World Unity Foundation in Chicago formed a new periodical, entitled *World Unity Magazine* (1927-1935). In 1935, *World Unity Magazine* was renamed *World Order* (which ran over three periods: 1935-1949, 1966-1990, 1993-2007). These four organs were outlets for American readers to receive translations of Bahá'í Scripture as well as articles relating Bahá'í theology to social issues of the day (Bahá'í World News Service 2018). Within these outlets and across nearly a century of their combined publication, the topic of race figures conspicuously, yet in highly variant prominence.

Study of the variation in racialized discourse in these periodicals will add depth and nuance to the story of race and religion in the United States in several ways. First, studying Bahá'í attempts to define race (and related terms such as prejudice and racism) will illumine the simultaneous use and contestation of surrounding ecclesial, lay, scientific, secular, and other religious traditions' understandings of human difference. Second, given that relatively little is known in the academy about the Bahá'í Faith more generally, and even less about their intersection with race and racism, this study will be a formative step in scholarship about a religion that is emerging from obscurity. Third, recent scholarship indicates that “religion plays an even more significant role in race relations than commonly recognized” (Emerson, Korver-Glenn, and Douds 2015, 355); what remains is to tease out how American Bahá'í discourse adds to our understanding of

the great “American Dilemma” (Myrdal 1944) of race in the development of the United States. Hence, through a content analysis of the aforementioned four periodicals, I shall attempt to answer the following research question: *what are the major variations of the concepts of both race and racial prejudice as articulated in the popular discourse of American Bahá’í periodicals?*

A Brief Primer on the Bahá’í Faith

The Bahá’í Faith was founded in 1863 in Persia by Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí Núrí (1817–1892) or “Bahá’u’lláh” (translated from the Arabic as “Glory of God”). However, there was a substantial precursor to His movement, as Sayyid ‘Alí Muḥammad Shírází (1819-1950) or “The Báb” (translated from the Arabic as “The Gate”) claimed in 1844 that He was the fulfilment of the Islamic prophecy of the appearance of the Mahdi or al-Qá’im who would appear shortly before the return of ‘Ísá (Jesus). The Báb’s ministry lasted six years before he was martyred in Tabríz, Persia (now Iran) in 1850. Before His death, The Báb acknowledged that he was the forerunner to “He whom God shall make manifest” (Smith 2000a: 180-81). As followers of The Báb (called “Bábís”), Bahá’u’lláh and his family were imprisoned in Tehran as heretics and enemies of Islám. While imprisoned in 1852, Bahá’u’lláh claimed he was visited by an angel or “Hûríyyih” (the “Maid of Heaven”) who revealed that He was the one to Whom The Báb referred (the dominant Bahá’í exegetic is that Bahá’u’lláh, like The Báb before Him, was a Messenger or “Manifestation” of God) (cf. Hatcher 2019a; Hughey forthcoming; McGlinn 1999; Savi 2010). In 1863 in Baghdad, Bahá’u’lláh made the first public declaration of His claim. Those that followed him were called “Bahá’ís.” Leadership of the Bahá’í Faith passed from Bahá’u’lláh (1817-1892) to His eldest son ‘Abbás (1844-1921), known as

‘Abdu’l-Bahá (translated from the Arabic as “Servant of Glory”). After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s death, leadership passed to Bahá’u’lláh’s great-grandson Shoghí Effendi (1897-1957) (known as the “Guardian”). Shoghí Effendi left no heir, and in congruence with Bahá’u’lláh’s Will and Testament (*Kitáb-i-‘Ahd*), upon Effendi’s death in 1957, leadership passed to the Universal House of Justice (1963-present), a council democratically elected by the members of the national Bahá’í councils of the different countries of the world, which are also elected by delegates from local Bahá’í communities. That succession of leadership is, Bahá’í scripture outlines, protected by a divinely-ordained “Lesser Covenant”—an version of the Abrahamic or “Greater Covenant” that refers to a chain of successive, infallible, and Divinely-appointed governance. McMullen (2000, 11-12) outlined this organizational framework and found it inculcated a simultaneous concern for local and global issues amongst Bahá’ís:

The Bahá’í Faith is a distinctive religious movement participating in globalization processes by creating a global religious identity for its adherents through both ideological and organizational means, systematically bridging the activities of a local Bahá’í community with a world center that provides ideological coherence and coordination The Bahá’í Faith inspires in adherents a globewide “collective consciousness” (Durkheim 1965) with a universal message and identity, and also links a network of local communities to a global bureaucratic structure. This bridging of the local and global establishes not only symbolic connections, but also lines of authority and communication, making the movement sociologically worth studying. Bahá’ís can be characterized as reflexive “situated universalists.” They are universalists in that both their ideology and their ecclesiastical structures orient their perspective toward the world-as-a-whole, promoting “unity in diversity,” the “oneness of humanity,” and the “oneness of religion.” But the concern for the oneness of humanity leads them back to their local community as the crucible in which this universality is “particularized.”

While McMullen provides a thorough organizational overview of the Bahá’í Faith’s organizational structure, the demographic characteristics of the Bahá’í Faith can be challenging to nail down with precise certainty. Difficulties with measurement, that

are not exclusive to Bahá'í populations, mean that “there are invariable [sic] problems of quantification unless the movement's own enumeration techniques are exceptionally efficient, or government censuses incorporate questions on religion” (Smith and Momen 1989, 69). Despite general complications, including specific complications of counting Bahá'ís in areas in which they are persecuted (like Iran), the World Religion Database (2020) numbered Bahá'ís at approximately eight and half million and these followers live in every country of the world (with the exception of the Vatican). The country with the greatest number of Bahá'ís is India, where a Bahá'í House of Worship (known as the “Lotus Temple”) outside of New Delhi is frequently visited. The Bahá'í Faith is the second most widespread religion in the world (next to Christianity) and as of 2019 is the only *religion* that grew *faster* than the general population in every United Nations region over the past century (CBS News 2019).

Principles of Bahá'í Theology

The Bahá'í “Canonical Texts” are authored by four individuals and one institution: The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice. Taken together, their output is voluminous (Collins 1990). Approximately 70,000 tablets, letters, prayers, and books from The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi have been tentatively identified, but only a small fraction has been authenticated (Smith 2008). The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá wrote and spoke in Persian and Arabic, while Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice frequently communicated in English (Smith 2000b). When Scripture is authenticated by The Universal House of Justice, it is published in hardcopy and digitally via the Bahá'í Reference Library—relaunched in 2018 (www.bahai.org/library/). Todd

Lawson (2012, 468) writes in the *Journal of Religious History* that Bahá'í scripture includes:

new prayers, new religious principles and laws, and what is considered a divinely ordained new system of organization whose purpose was, in the first place, to safeguard the unity of the Baha'i community itself so that it might, in the second place, reflect an image and example of such far flung and variegated unity to a world divided and at odds in every conceivable way.

Accordingly, there exist many Bahá'í Scriptural injunctions on social and spiritual issues, from racial prejudice and gender equality to the independent investigation of truth and the harmony of science and religion. These are often juxtaposed within three larger principles, often referred to as the “Three Onenesses.” Scholar of Bahá'í theology Moojan Momen (2017, 137-38), articulates these as follow:

As far as the basic teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are concerned, they could be simplified to three points. First, that Baha'is believe that there is only one God or one Ultimate Reality. This one Ultimate Reality has from time to time sent teachers to the world who have been the founders of the world religions. Second, in reality therefore, there has only been one religion that has been gradually unfolded to humanity through these teachers that have come to the world. This religion has been progressively revealed in accordance with the needs of humanity in each age and differences between religions are mainly due to the differing needs of each age (as well as the accretion of traditions). Third, the needs of humanity in this age revolve around the attainment of the oneness of humanity and that is therefore the central teaching of Baha'u'llah. The implication of this is that human beings must put aside everything that divides them and creates conflict.

Especially in regard to the latter principle of the oneness of humanity, situated as it is in a religious faith wedded to scientific investigation, there exist both mystical and materialist exegeses. Bahá'í orthopraxy generally oscillates between literal and allegorical hermeneutics (cf. Cole 1998; Fananapazir, Fazel, and McGlinn 2008; Scharbrodt 2008). Given this background, Bahá'í theological interpretations of pertinent social issues and concepts—especially on such “hot button” topics like race—are

polysemic and novel. For many Bahá'ís, the Bahá'í dispensation represents a significant reinterpretation of both the meaning of religion and the relationship of the divine to humanity. On the one hand, conventionally, religion is understood as monological; an unchanging reality that transcends society and history which adherents tend to treat as an absolute, eschatological finality (Hughey forthcoming). On the other hand, a corresponding normative secular view tends to conceptualize religion as an antiquated obstacle unable to contend with the unique and new social, scientific, and environmental advances and challenges of modernity. However, Bahá'í theologian Nadar Saiedi (2021, 81-82) explains how Bahá'í theology attempts to evade this Scylla and Charybdis:

the Baha'i concept of religion defines religion as a dialogue between God and humanity, a product of an interaction between divine knowledge/will and a specific stage of human development, needs, and conditions. Religion is not an absolute divine command. Instead, it is the reflection of the divine will in the mirror of human historical receptivity. Consequently, religion becomes historical and dynamic. The source of religion is absolute, but religion is the relative manifestation of this absolute in the mirror of human reality.

Religion is thus reconceptualized as dialogical; the word of God becomes a living reality and a dialectical synthesis of eternity and historicity. Despite such hermeneutic complexity, “the Baha'i Faith is heir to the distinctive Abrahamic cluster of myths and religious grammars or styles of piety so familiar to scholars and students of religion” (Lawson 2012, 463). This is particularly the case among American Bahá'í practitioners.

Race and the Bahá'í Faith in the United States

According to the historian Robert Stockman (1990), American Bahá'ís often articulate a Protestant-like “sacred history” about the U.S.:

Like any religious group, the American Baha'is have constructed a sacred history, or myth, about their country. This sacred history is primarily

based on the values found in Baha'i scripture and does not appear to be borrowed from American Protestantism or secular culture to a significant degree. However, the Baha'i myth's concept of America's uniqueness, its view of the possible future greatness of America, and its consequent critique of current American social conditions bear some remarkable parallels to the Protestant myth.

Buck (2009, 174) relatedly argues that such Bahá'í sacralization of the U.S. pertains generally to the principle of the “oneness of humanity” and particularly to racial unity:

The Bahá'í perspective on the destiny of America should be contextualized within the Bahá'í paradigm of unity, and, more specifically, within the Bahá'í view of “sacred history” (or as systematic theologians of Christian doctrine would term it, “salvation history”). That is to say, America will fulfill a world-unifying purpose consonant with a larger civilizational purpose . . . the Bahá'í Faith is a world religion whose purpose is to unite all the races, religions, and nations into one common homeland.

While I will survey the scholarship at the nexus of race and the Bahá'í Faith in the review of literature that follows this chapter (Chapter II), it is important to briefly acknowledge the central role that race, racial prejudice, and racial equality has played in the American Bahá'í context.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the American Bahá'í community stood at about 2000 people, most of them from a decidedly WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) background (Hatcher and Martin 1984). Just two Black Americans were Bahá'ís in 1899 (Robert C. Turner, the first African American man to become a Bahá'í, and Olive Jackson, the first African American woman to join the Bahá'í Faith). Yet American Bahá'í communities slowly diversified. For example, Bahá'í activities within Washington D.C. during the first decade of the 20th century witnessed about a dozen African American conversions (representing approximately 17 percent of the Bahá'í community in D.C.). By 1911, Louis G. Gregory, a prominent Black Bahá'í in the D.C. community, established a relationship with W. E. B. Du Bois. That year, Gregory sent

Du Bois a book on the Bahá'í Faith and both gave his own address entitled "The Bahai Movement" and read a "Letter from Abdu'l Baha" at the First Universal Races Congress in London of July 1911, where Du Bois was a delegate. Consequently, just as Louis Gregory was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S., becoming the first Black Bahá'í to serve on that body, 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the U.S., giving many talks on race and racial inequality. One such address was delivered in April 1912 at Hull House, a settlement home for immigrants (often "othered" because of their residents' non-White, ethnic backgrounds) in Chicago, Illinois and another in April 1912 at Howard University in Washington, DC in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated:

Today I am most happy, for I see here a gathering of the servants of God. I see white and black sitting together. There are no whites and blacks before God. All colors are one, and that is the color of servitude to God. Scent and color are not important. The heart is important. If the heart is pure, white or black or any color makes no difference. God does not look at colors; He looks at the hearts. He whose heart is pure is better. He whose character is better is more pleasing. He who turns more to the Abhá Kingdom is more advanced. In the realm of existence colors are of no importance. ('Abdu'l-Bahá 1982, 44-45)

Buck (2013, 111) reiterated 'Abdu'l-Bahá's focus on race during his visit to the US, writing:

'Abdu'l-Bahá came to North America in 1912 to bring about what may be characterized as "interracial emancipation." As son, successor and spokesman of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá proclaimed Bahá'í principles of ideal race relations (including interracial marriage), gender equality, and world peace These were radical teachings during the Jim Crow era of forced racial segregation, to be sure.

Relatedly, Stockman (1995, 244) wrote, "Abdu'l-Bahá also spoke extensively about the dangers facing the United States if it did not overcome its racial divide; he set the tone for future Bahá'í concern about the issue."

‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s concentration on race was not lost on people already focused on the quest for social equality. Many African Americans, particularly among the educated elite, became well-acquainted with the Bahá’í Faith in the 1910s. Accordingly, Lawson (2012, 469) details:

The intensity of Baha’i efforts to counter this pernicious, painful social disease [racism] may be thought to have been far in advance of that obtaining in the general public of the time. This is borne out by the initial attraction . . . to Baha’i teachings of “race amity” by the brilliant, eloquent, and influential W. E. B. Du Bois, among others within black intelligentsia.

For example, just one month after ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s 1912 speech at Howard, Du Bois covered ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit in *The Crisis* [the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.)] and declared him one of the “Men of the Month”:

The accusations brought against the followers of the Bab [sic] were very similar to those brought against the early Christians. They were charged with being “bad citizens,” because they taught love to all men of all races . . . Naturally, he [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] is interested in the question of race prejudice in this country, where he has so many disciples. (Du Bois 1912a, 15)

Moreover, Louis Gregory and W. E. B. Du Bois’s relationship grew as they corresponded frequently about strategies for Black uplift in the United States. Their friendship, coupled with Du Bois’s positive proclamation of the new religion, further served to promote the Bahá’í Faith among Black intelligentsia. For instance, Robert S. Abbott, in his role as founder and editor of the preeminent Black newspaper *The Chicago Defender*, gave “widespread publicity to Baha’i race relations ideals and efforts to counter America’s racial crisis by addressing its root causes, welling up from the deep-seated racial animosities and disparities that persisted in the aftermath of American slavery and institutionalized by Jim Crow laws” (Buck 2012, 5). So also, Alain Leroy Locke became

a Bahá'í (in 1918) and was directly involved in Bahá'í “Race Amity” activities, including in the wake of his firing as a professor from Howard University for his support of equal pay between Black and White faculty and his February and March 1926 travels with Louis Gregory on a lecture tour to speak about the Bahá'í dedication to racial equality (Morrison 1982; Buck 2012, 23).

Due in part to such activities, African American membership rose from just a few members in 1900 to approximately five percent of the American Bahá'í community by 1930 (Smith 1987). Also, overall membership growth continued, albeit modestly, over the 20th century: American Bahá'ís numbered 4800 in 1944, 7000 in 1956, 13,000 in 1969, 75,000 in 1979, and 100,000 by 1987 (Stockman 1995). Over that same time, in addition to the overall demographic increase and a particular growth of Black Bahá'ís, Stockman (1995, 243) describes:

Native Americans have been attracted to the Bahá'í religion in increasing numbers since the 1940s; currently there are several thousand Indian and Eskimo Bahá'ís, especially in rural Alaska and on the Navajo and Sioux reservations. Hispanics have also joined and constitute a thousand or two members. Immigration has profoundly shaped the American Bahá'í community's ethnic composition . . . the American Bahá'í community has several thousand Bahá'ís of Southeast Asian background; no one knows exactly how many there are. In some cities—such as Portland, Oregon, and Lowell, Massachusetts—Southeast Asian Bahá'ís are a majority or substantial minority of the Bahá'í community. The Islamic Revolution in Iran [of 1979] also forced tens of thousands of Bahá'ís to flee that country and about ten thousand have settled in the United States, especially in greater Los Angeles.

Attention to race was common in American Bahá'í discourse. A number of statements by various Bahá'í administrative bodies and individuals emphasized racialized issues, as witnessed in J. E. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* (1937) and former Universal House of Justice member Glenford E. Mitchell's *The Most Challenging Issue: Teaching Negroes* (1967) (cf. Hughey 2017). By the 1990s, the American Bahá'í focus

on “race unity” was renewed. Reiterating Shoghí Effendi’s identification of “racial prejudice” as “the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá’í community” (1938b, 34-35) the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States published in 1991 *The Vision of Race Unity, America’s Most Challenging Issue* to focus on race-related issues. Throughout the 1990s, especially in the wake of the Los Angeles race “riots” or “rebellion” in 1992 (which coincided with the Bahá’í World Congress at the centenary of the passing of Bahá’u’lláh), American Bahá’ís became more vocal and prominent on issues of race, including having a member serve as commissioner on the federal initiative to establish the Martin Luther King Federal Holiday (Stockman 1995).

Making the Familiar Strange

In this thesis I explore the variation in racial discourse in a religious movement generally assumed to have progressive and otherwise “antiracist” evaluations of race relations and racial inequality (cf. Smith 2019). I hope to also demonstrate the heterogeneity of such conversations, as I wish to illuminate the important nuances, contradictions, and patterns within Bahá’í popular discourse about race. In this vein, I approach this topic from the point of view that I should neither attack nor defend. My role as a researcher is to take the familiar and recognizable discursive landmarks, idioms, reports, phrases, and rationales for Bahá’í evaluations of race and, simply, *make them strange*. In so doing, it is not my intention either to submerge or to accentuate embarrassing or “racist” stances within these periodicals. Instead, my aim is to analyze the structure of the discourse as a critical and rapt reader. I favor this stance in order to encourage an acute yet sympathetic analytic stance toward religious and racialized language in order to contemplate the socio-historical significance of race and religion

anew (cf. Hughey 2009a). This is a slippery, but necessary task, if we are to understand the import of race for those that organize their lives around, and in, religious movements, as well as for those who will be affected most by the actions of religious actors and institutions.

Chapter II.

Literature Review

The lion's share of research on race and the Bahá'í Faith appears in the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* and the *Bahá'í Studies Review* (e.g., Gonzales 1995; Buck 2011; Kahn 2016; Hughey 2017; Kluge 2017; Wheeler 2017; Manning 2017; Hatcher 2019b; Smith 2019). In addition to articles published under the aegis of Bahá'í administrative bodies, there exists sparse academic research published on race and the Bahá'í Faith. However, within this small corpus of work, there exist three distinct streams of research.

“Race Unity” in the American Bahá'í Community

First, scholars examine Bahá'í orthodoxy and orthopraxy regarding scriptural imperatives to abandon racial prejudices, such as Bahá'í provisions on “marriage across racial and cultural boundaries” (Black 2016, 4), support for “multiracialism and multiculturalism” (Jenkins 2003, 394), and Bahá'í activist opposition to racial inequality (Thomas 2004, 2017; Karlberg 2010; Hassall 2012; Ghanea 2013; Toosi 2013; Venters 2015, 2019; Stockman 2020). While a handful of scholars have investigated how Bahá'ís navigate racial inequality in, for example, Australia and New Zealand (Hassell Smith 2022, 2012), Germany (Sadjed 2017), or Soviet Russia (Schifter 1981), most scholarship focuses on the U.S. In his review of Bahá'í endeavors to address American racial inequality, Thomas (1984, 38) contends:

American Bahá'ís have a rich legacy in the arena of race relations. It is not all rosey as some would like to believe, but it is instructive and

inspirational The only real difference was the ideals to which Bahá'ís aspired. No other multiracial organization or movement placed such high demands on its followers or provided such an imposed human model of its teachings for them to emulate.

Similarly for others (e.g., Brown 1984; Piroozmandi 1991; Thomas 2006a), the Bahá'í Faith's growth in the U.S. over the twentieth century was marked by sustained commitment to the principle of racial equality, even as that ideal was unevenly manifest. Stockman (1995, 244) thus writes:

While integration of races and ethnic groups in the American Bahá'í community has never been perfect or without controversy, it has consistently been a priority of the American Bahá'ís, and explains why persons of varied ethnic backgrounds have been able to coexist in local Bahá'í communities. Intermarriage among these groups is a sign of their acceptance of each other. The American experience has helped set the tone for Bahá'í communities worldwide.

The varied local exigencies and social currents of American Bahá'í engagement with “the race question” are well mapped by various ethnographic studies and in-depth interviews (e.g., Jenkins 2003; McMullen 1997; Venters 2015) as well as auto-ethnographic and biographical case studies (e.g., De Souza 2020; Haithman 1987; Morrison 1982; Penn 2020).

For instance, Jenkins (2003) draws from four years of comparative field studies among the International Churches of Christ, the People's Temple, and U.S. Bahá'í community to show how membership affords both greater exposure to, and involvement with, a racially diverse network of people, while it simultaneously limits and defines the manner in which faith communities understand and experience racial diversity. For example, adherents are expected to invest significant energy in developing close, moral relationships with people as part of the cure both for individual and social ills, yet the focus on personalism tends “to severely limit individuals from serious engagement with

larger issues of social justice and racialization” (Jenkins 2003, 406). The comparative nature of the article helps to gauge how similar religious movements were concurrently navigating racial concepts beyond their stated rhetoric with an eye toward implementation—particularly in relation to what Jenkins calls the “intimate diversity” or the “enactment and/or narration of close and caring relationships among a racially and ethnically diverse membership” (Jenkins 2003, 393). Jenkins finds that “contemporary U.S. Bahá’ís” are able to “erect high boundaries and promote their religious communities as exceptionally able to actualize contemporary ideals of multiracialism and multiculturalism” (2003, 394). Moreover, in *No Jim Crow Church*, Venters (2015) provides an in-depth examination of the Bahá’ís of South Carolina. Documenting the trials and triumphs of pursuing the formation of an integrated faith community through lay-person understandings of race relations in a context of unsettled and anxious times beset with White supremacist violence, missionary work, and changing legal and cultural standards, Venters’ in-depth examination of South Carolina reveals the lived exigencies of a faith community in relation to the stated goals and idealized principles of the religious community.

Focusing on the role of American Bahá’ís in opposing anti-Black racism, Smith (2019) explores the Bahá’í interpretations of a pseudo-Biblical phrase uttered and written by central founding figures of the Bahá’í Faith in which people of African descent are compared to the “pupil of the eye” through which the “light of the spirit shineth forth” (Smith 2019, 9). As others have noted (Taylor 1988; Thomas 2006a; Buck 2012a, 2012b; 2019), the “pupil” passage was a radical rupture in the racial epistemology of Jim Crow and continues to experience wide evocation in American Bahá’í circles today,

especially in the context of the “Black Lives Matter” movement (Smith 2020). Hence, Smith’s 2019 article dovetailed with a “Pupil of the Eye Conference” also held in 2019, to which the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States wrote: “. . . *the black pupil of the eye* . . . This powerful statement provides indisputable proof of the greatness of your [African Americans’] divinely appointed station and mission” (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States 2019). Moreover, one of the conference organizers stated, “The pupil is essential for light . . . Humanity needs this light, which only the dark people can provide” (Talley 2020). Smith’s essay illuminates how the metaphor has been interpreted, used, or even ignored in Bahá’í communities and what that engagement meant for the American Bahá’í communities’ both abstract and lived understandings of the concepts of race and racism (especially anti-Black racism) in our contemporary moment. In a similar vein, Thomas’s (2006a) chapter “‘The Pupil of the Eye:’ African Americans and the Making of the American Baha’i Community, 1898-2003” provides historical insight into how Bahá’í understandings of race and racism were conceptualized and discussed, especially in relation to segregation and integration and the varied implementations of the cardinal Bahá’í principle of the “oneness of humanity.” In particular, Thomas’s concern with the factors that simultaneously constrained and enabled the reception of the Bahá’í Faith by African Americans in the early part of the 20th century, is a valuable resource.

Overall, most scholarship in this tradition focuses on the “race unity” or “race amity” efforts of American Bahá’ís. This approach centers on Bahá’í efforts to hold integrated meetings, combat personal prejudices and the exercise of stereotypes in interactions, and to oppose structural racism on both meso- and macro-societal levels

(e.g., Buck 2019; Etter-Lewis 2019; McMullen 2019; Thomas 2002; Buck and Locke 2020). Illuminating and mapping the “antiracist” endeavors of varied American Bahá’í communities underpins this stream of scholarship. The next area of scholarship shifts tack and is informed by an underlying concern for Bahá’ís apologetics, not only as a defense against critics, but as a form of systematic theology that can “help explore the teachings of the Faith in the context of prevailing philosophies and standards in a secular society, and to answer critical inquiries in a rational manner” (Schaefer 2001, 85), particularly as pertaining to racial equality and inclusion.

Hagiographies of Bahá’í Antiracism

The second area of scholarship—perhaps as a reaction to the moral panic over “cults” and American Bahá’í anxieties that their faith would escape portrayal as a legitimate and serious religion within the Abrahamic tradition (cf. Bromley 1998; Momen 2007)—emphasizes respected individuals who have become Bahá’ís. African American intellectuals, artists, and activists receive particular attention within this body of research. Works such as *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá’ís in North America, 1898-2004* (Thomas 2006b) and *The Pupil of the Eye: African Americans in the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* (Taylor 1988) are particularly emblematic. For example, figures such as Alain LeRoy Locke, the “father of the Harlem Renaissance” and noted member of the Bahá’í Faith, receive much attention (e.g. Grant 2016; Weinfeld 2017). In this vein, Buck’s (2012a) examination of the Bahá’í “Race Amity” movement (a series of conferences, policy initiatives, platform positions, and cooperative relationships with Black intelligentsia) concentrates on figures such as Robert S. Abbott (editor of *The Chicago Defender*). Buck’s focus on African American Bahá’ís illumine how Bahá’í

messaging about race was understood by racial activists and leaders of the day, as well as how figures like Abbott influenced the American Bahá'í community's understanding of the race concept, racial segregation, and the role of Black leadership, nationalism, and economic self-determination as opposed to notions of Anglo assimilation, integration, and White paternalism.

Buck (2012b) similarly explored the relationship of W. E. B. Du Bois to the Bahá'í Faith, noting that his first wife (Nina Du Bois née Gomer) became a Bahá'í while living in New York City. Buck concentrates on Du Bois's initial fascination and support for the Bahá'í Faith, especially regarding its unflinching dedication to racial equality. Buck then covers Du Bois's public criticism of the Bahá'í Faith, resulting from the mistaken notion that in 1937 Bahá'ís in Nashville, TN were holding segregated Bahá'í meetings. Bahá'í meetings were forbidden from being racially segregated, but individual Bahá'ís, under threat at the time from the Ku Klux Klan, were instructed by Bahá'í administrative authorities that they could hold racially homogenous meetings of their own initiatives in their own homes if needed, in so long as these were to plan and implement desegregated official Bahá'í community meetings. Buck (2012b, 560) thus wrote:

What Du Bois failed to appreciate was that the rationale behind the Baha'i policy was pragmatically aimed at subverting Jim Crowism in such wise that, as prudence dictated, the interim policy allowed "Baha'i teachers" to "make their first contacts with each race separately, and as individuals are brought to the point of accepting the principle of the oneness of mankind they will be received into the Baha'i community where no prejudice or discrimination is permitted to exist."

What Buck fails to note is that Du Bois seems to have later understood this strategy and reconciled with the American Bahá'í community. In fact, while Du Bois's beliefs are often framed as either agnostic or atheist, in 1954 Du Bois himself recalled his

membership in “the Congregational Church for fifteen years and of the Episcopalian Church for ten years” (Du Bois 1954) and emphasized that “If I were going to join a religious organization I should certainly be strongly tempted to join the Bahá’í movement because of its broad principles, its international and inter-racial program” (Du Bois 1954) (cf. Hughey 2020).

Other examples include scholarship on the first Black Poet Laureate, Robert Hayden, whose dedication to the Bahá’í Faith in both his personal life and in his poetry, was exceptionally notable (Post 1976; Hatcher 1990; Boyles 1992; Pavlić 2002; Buck and Smith 2017; Smith 2018). For instance, Hatcher’s book *From the Auroral Darkness: The Life and Poetry of Robert Hayden* (1984) is replete with discussion of Hayden’s embrace of Bahá’í theology, especially toward questions of race and racism. In that vein, Pavlić (2002, 536) notes that Hayden himself explained “how his Baha’i beliefs sustained him in the maelstrom of the wasteland [American racism] and underwrote his world view and his unique approach to the craft of poetry”, while Conniff (1999), citing Hatcher (1984), contends that Hayden was rather removed from the,

contentious politics surrounding the emerging post-colonial African and Caribbean literature—still loosely grouped at the Dakar conference under the title ‘negritude’—was just about as foreign to Hayden’s sensibilities as the cultural politics of the Fisk Conference. A Baha’i by faith, Hayden was committed to ‘the affirmation of independent investigation of the truth’ and to abstinence from partisan politics of any kind (Conniff 1999, 489)

Moreover, scholars have also highlighted African American Bahá’í Dizzy Gillespie (e.g., Atkins 2006; Bivins 2015; Feustle 2019). Scholarship notes how Gillespie’s jazz performances were shaped by Bahá’í beliefs, and in turn, how his music—and the African American jazz artform *writ large*—helped shape the American Bahá’í religious community:

Since Dizzy Gillespie's conversion to the Faith in 1968, jazz music has played an increasingly prominent role in the cultural life of the American Bahá'í community, in part because Gillespie and other jazz musicians have actively promoted the music within their faith community and performed jazz in service to its wider propagation. Consequently, the American Bahá'í community has accepted the music as a vehicle for attracting public attention and promoting its doctrines of world unity and racial equality (Atkins 2006, 385).

American Bahá'í Debates over Race and Racism

The third line of scholarly inquiry focuses on the ethno-racial conflicts, challenges, debates, and divisions against and within U.S. Bahá'í communities (e.g., Frelick 1987; Stockman 1995; Bozorgmehr 1996, 1997; Merchant 2000; Thomas 2006a, 2006b; Haines 2007; Talebi and Desjardins 2012; Venters 2015; Bramson 2018). This approach highlights both opposition to the “race unity” imperatives of the Bahá'í Faith, as well as internal faith community debates over racial inequality, Black mistrust, and White paternalism alongside external resistance to Bahá'í attempts to racially integrate. For example, both ethno-religious discrimination against Bahá'ís, as well as the targeting of Bahá'ís for being an inter-racially integrated faith community, have been well-documented (e.g., Frelick 1987; Mahboubi and Mahboubi 2008; Amanat 2011; Karlberg 2010; Shahvar 2018).

A handful of studies take a critical approach toward Bahá'í community endeavors to embody racial integration, equality, and unity. For example, in a noted scholarly exposé of “prejudices against blacks” (Cole 2000, 119) and a host of other racialized antipathy, Cole (2000) examines the mid-1980s dissolution of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Los Angeles, California by the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly. Within this debacle, Cole pays particular attention to the role of racial and ethnic conflict among Whites, African Americans and newly immigrant Iranians within the Bahá'í community

of Los Angeles. Curiously, while Cole originally states that racial antipathy was at the heart of the Los Angeles community's problems (2000, 114) he concludes that "race relations . . . were secondary to ones of power and money" (2000, 122). While an important study, his haphazard use of interviews he conducted (interview names, numbers, dates, and transcripts are absent) and his use of "*Dialogue Magazine Archives*" (an organ Cole was involved in publishing, which together raises questions of conflict of interest and bias) invites skepticism. In another study, also centered on Los Angeles, California, Bozorgmehr (1997) compared Armenian, Bahai, and Jewish Iranian immigrants to Los Angeles, finding that "the Bahais [sic] have experienced the most discrimination among the three minority groups" which has proven "an important barrier to their assimilation" (1997, 394). However, Bozorgmehr found that newly immigrated Iranian Bahá'ís had the least segregated friendship networks and were the most religiously observant of all three groups. Overall, Bozorgmehr contends that such experiences are "to be expected in view of the universalistic outlook of this religion which encourages integration" (1997, 404).

Recent years have witnessed scholarship at the intersection of Indigenous studies and the Bahá'í Faith, with particular focus on how the causes and consequences of the racialization of North American First Peoples have been understood in varied Bahá'í communities. For example, Kahn (2016), the nephew of the first Native American to be elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, explores the "challenges of Indigenous Communities and to participate in [Bahá'í] community-building activities among Indigenous people" and shares a rather candid assessment of "the prophetic promises in the Bahá'í Writings about Native Americans' potential to

contribute greatly to the peoples of the world once they have reconciled their own traditional views and teachings with the global promises of Bahá'u'lláh” (Kahn 2016, 89). Other scholars have explored indigenous-Bahá'í challenges, such as Horton's (2016) study that draws upon interviews with Indigenous Bahá'ís from Canada and the United States. Horton examines how Bahai community building over the 1960s to 1990s stood in stark contrast to the “colonial policies and attitudes [that] remained ripe in North America at large” (Horton 2016, 65) yet she emphasizes that the building of Bahá'í-indigenous communities was:

neither easy nor automatic and was especially fraught for Indigenous adherents, who also confronted tensions of intercultural communication and understanding and sometimes outright racism. Implementing unity in diversity is a gradual process that continues to be worked out in particular contexts over time. This process itself reveals the Bahai religion's role as a rich space of intercultural contact and community building. (Horton 2016, 65)

Relatedly, yet concluding with a completely different evaluation, both MacEoin (2009) and Nash (2021) assert that colonial and ethno-racial orientalist tropes impact both historical and contemporary interpretations of Baha'i scripture and leadership. MacEoin (2009, 533) thus argues that the “influence of Shoghi Effendi's orientalist vision of the Babi-Baha'i movement on later Baha'i writing in the West has been profound and enduring” while Nash (2021, 13) contends:

On the level of its propagation in the West in the twentieth century the foundational Bahai [sic] narrative operated within the orbit of the dominant Western discourse of its time, mimicking what many of the intelligentsia of Western countries had been saying for a long time with respect to the Islamic Middle East and other Muslim populations. Electing to write from a self-imposed self-orientalizing perspective not unusual among modern eastern intellectuals, Shoghi Effendi accessed Orientalist tropes to help him structure a binary religious narrative in which followers of the new revelation were opposed and persecuted by those entrenched in the previous, superseded one.

Despite the robust debates within this burgeoning tripartite scholarly conversation at the nexus of race and Bahá'í Faith, a large gap remains. What exactly do Bahá'ís mean when they talk about “race” or “racial prejudice”? Rarely are definitions offered, leaving meanings opaque at best. A prime arena for research on how the meanings of race become calcified in particular eras, is that of religious discourse. Given Berger and Luckmann’s (1966, 51) contention that language is “the most important sign system of human society,” the ability to examine the Bahá'í discursive references to race and aspects of a racialized society—such as notions about prejudice, culture, or equality—is necessary. In fact, while research details how scientific discourse has demarcated the concept of race, Emerson, Korver-Glenn, and Douds (2015, 355) argue that “analyzing the most recent publications on race and religion suggests a need for deeper and more creative theorization on the race-religion interplay.”

Hence, there remains a lacuna in the scholarship as relates to the varied discursive constructions and understandings of race and racism. By tracking the race concept and definitions of racism beyond authoritative scripture, and using American Bahá'í periodicals as a longitudinal data source, one can gain insight into how subjective meanings are objectified within the narratives central to Bahá'í orthopraxy and community life.

Chapter III.

Data and Methodology

I understand media as the means or channels of mass communication through which news, entertainment, education, propaganda, and/or personal information travels (e.g., broadcasting, print publishing, billboards, Internet, etc.) (Hunt 1997). Regardless of form and format, the sociologist Norman Denzin stated that understanding media is “basic to the understanding of race relations in any society” (Denzin 2001, 244). Relatedly, Mastro (2015, 4) posits that “it is socially significant to systematically document racial/ethnic representations in the media as these portrayals contribute meaningfully to both real-world intergroup dynamics as well as beliefs about oneself and one’s own group in society.” Examining discourse about race in historical religious periodicals necessitates sensitivity not only just to unidirectional dynamics (e.g., how media represents race) but also to how the meanings and influences of “race” and “media” inform and alter one another. Consider that media are:

both a barometer of race relations and a potential accelerator either to racial cohesion or to cultural separation and political conflict . . . media productions offer a revealing indicator of the new forms of racial differentiation. Beyond providing a diagnostic tool, a measuring device for the state of race relations, the media also act as a causal agent: they help to shape and reshape the culture. (Entman and Rojecki 2001, 2-3)

Acknowledgment of the co-constitutive nature of race and media gestures toward the added necessity of departure from simplistic renderings of racial media representations as simply “good” or “bad”, “racist” or “antiracist.” Stuart Hall characterized this dilemma well in *Representations* (1997, 274):

The problem ... is that adding positive images to the largely negative repertoire of the dominant regime of representation increases the diversity of ways that ‘being black’ is represented, but does not necessarily displace the negative. Since the binaries remain in place, meaning continues to be framed by them. The strategy challenges the binaries—but it does not undermine them. The peace-loving, child-caring, Rastafarian can still appear, in the following day’s newspapers, as an exotic and violent black stereotype.

This is an unfortunately common “clinical” approach to the study of race and media. Hence, rather than adjudicate a particular instance of racial discourse as fitting within a Manichean framework as a strategy of remediation, I instead focus on a mode of study that aims to map discursive variation and identify how it functioned. My attempt to identify the “labor” of media thus appreciates many factors such as authorial intent, editorial gatekeeping, and audience reception, as well as the position of media discourse within their varied fields of culture (meaning) and relations (power) such as economic, politic, cultural, social, and historical contexts. To help limit what would otherwise be a rather large and unwieldy project, I focus on emic (rather than etic) American Bahá’í media as reflections of the American Bahá’í “insider” discussions about race and religion.

The Social Construction of Race in Popular Media Discourse

I address discussions about race within Bahá’í discourse outside of the “Canonical Texts.” The Bahá’í Canon is authored by four individuals and one institution: Siyyid Mirza ‘Alí Muḥammad Shírázī (1819-1850), known as “The Báb” (The Gate); the prophet-founder of the Bahá’í Faith, Mirza Husayn-‘Alí Nuri (1817-1892), known as “Bahá’u’lláh” (the Glory of God); the eldest son of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abbás (1844-1921), known as “‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Servant of Glory); the grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghí Effendi (1897-1957), and; the governing body of the Bahá’í Faith, the Universal House

of Justice, established in 1963. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are understood as “Manifestations of God,” and their writings are understood as “revealed” in mechanical fashion and are thus accepted as Divinely infallible. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi were authorized as infallible interpreters of the “revealed” writings of The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and authored many texts of their own, which are seen as partially-, dynamically-, or intuitively-inspired, but not Divinely revealed. The Universal House of Justice addresses topics not already present in Scripture and make authoritative decisions understood as Divinely-inspired and infallible. Rather than investigate either how Bahá'í Scripture conceptualizes race or how Bahá'í ecclesiastical authorities grapple with the concept of “race”, I examine the debates, contestations, and patterns that shape and form the meanings of race as they circulate within American Bahá'í popular discourse over the 20th century and early 21st century. An excellent source for such discourse is within American Bahá'í periodicals. In these organs, academics and scholars—both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í alike—share their views on the concepts of race and religion; a motley of opinions on racial inequality and prejudice from the Bahá'í laity find expression, and; Bahá'ís who reach distinction in their respective fields in the arts, business, government, journalism, and more share their views on race as pertains to the specific exigencies of their work and worship. The heterogeneity of perspectives, captured within these periodicals, serves as a rich reservoir for plumbing the depths of the American Bahá'í “social construction” of race.

Coined by Berger and Luckmann (1966), “social constructivism” has reached ascendance as a dominant theory for explaining why and how people interpret the world and understand social categories (such as race) as “pertaining to phenomena we recognize

as having a being independent of our own volition” (Berger and Luckman 1966, 13).

While viewing race as a product external to cognition, this approach refutes a positivist view in which “race” exists as an extant biological category (cf. Omi and Winant 2014, 36-42). That is, the social constructionist approach conceptualizes “race” as absent of biological validity, essence, or inherent ability to determine our lives. A major paradigm embraced in sociology and anthropology, and even within contemporary strands of biological and genomic sciences, social constructionism does not deny that clusters of human populations carry particular genetic information. But clusters of genetic material do not provide the basis for social distinctions that society recognizes as “race.” Rather, the arbitrary phenotypical markers we use to identify race substantially vary culturally, temporally, and spatially so that people make active and ongoing consensus, not without disagreement, as to what “race” means and how and what criteria we use to identify it. As the sociologists Karen Fields and Barbara Fields (1994, 113) put it, “Anyone who continues to believe in race as a physical attribute of individuals, despite the now commonplace disclaimers of biologists and geneticists, might as well also believe that Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy are real, and that the earth stands still while the sun moves.” Even Craig Venter, one of the first scientists to map the human genome, stated to *The Washington Post*: “The concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis” (Weiss and Gillis 2000, A1).

Despite the vacuity of the race concept, it is a powerful determinant of a host of social outcomes, making it a prescient “social fact” (Bonilla-Silva 1999). Race operates over myriad social dimensions as powerful ideologies, it exists as a dominant institution, it functions through group interests and personal identities, and within the scope of

everyday interactions (Roth 2016; Morning 2017). What we recognize as “racial” depends on arbitrarily selected and defined phenotypes, as well as practices, beliefs, customs, and many other random criteria we use as evidence for our claims. Importantly, the “race” category was birthed in the service of colonialism as a rationale for dominance and inequality. In many ways, the concept still serves that purpose, and racial inequality has become a hallmark of modernity and a scathing reminder of its hypocrisy. Simply put, “Race is a biological fiction with a social function” (Hughey 2017, 27).

People reify the myth of race as an ongoing social accomplishment, particularly through their discourse. Berger and Luckman thus wrote: “Language is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience” (1966, 35). Berger and Luckman here gesture toward an important insight that is to be accentuated: the language used to define the race concept does not reflect an underlying reality. That is, popular discourse is not simply a reflection of an already-formed, stable concept or identity we call “race”, but rather serves to create the very racial realities that many take for granted. This point has been made across varied academic registers. For example, Foucault (2003, 61) maintained that popular discourse not only describes race, but generates it; people’s narratives enable sorting into in and out groups—or “superrace” and “subrace” categories as Foucault called them. Additionally, Feagin and O’Brien (2003), Hill (2008), Myers (2005), Eliasoph (1999) and many others contend that the racial stories people use “... make their world more coherent and comprehensible” (Hill 2008, 34) (cf. Hughey 2022). And as the social constructivist philosopher Charles Mills (2017, 4) wrote, “People are ‘raced’ according to particular rules—we shift from a noun to a verb, from a pre-existing ‘natural’ state to an active

social process.” “Race” is therefore not a static thing but is a concept that is always contested and re-defined—often through language (Banton 1987; Murji and Solomos 2005). A prime arena for research on how race becomes “re-defined” rests within popular religious discourse.

By popular religious discourse, I mean to signal a contested site for the subjectivation of people in relation to various power dynamics, the most obvious of which for this thesis is how race operates as a system to both grant and deny social, political, and cultural agency. Moreover, “popular” media outlets, accessible to a wide and diverse audience—opposed to highbrow publications meant for consumption among only the highly-educated elite—provide insight into both diverse and “everyday”, banal manifestations of the social construction of race. As Turner (2003 [1990], 5) wrote:

Popular culture is a site where the construction of everyday life may be examined. The point of doing this is not only academic – that is, as an attempt to understand a process or practice – it is also political, to examine the power relations that constitute this form of everyday life and thus reveal the configurations of interests its construction serves.

It is important to realize that religious discourse often makes claims to know authentic or “otherworld” realities and meanings that underpin our known material world. In this sense, whatever “reality” is proposed exists as discourse produced to interject challenges into and resonate within the public understandings of the world. Hence, within the larger social constructionist framework, I view Bahá’í popular discourse through a “production of culture” lens that focuses on how symbolic elements of a cultural category—here in particular, “race”—are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved (Peterson and Anand 2004). I conceptualize the articles in these periodicals as “cultural objects” (Griswold 1986, 1992) produced to resonate within both the American Bahá’í religious community and within larger American society to which American Bahá’is discourse

appealed, both as potential converts if not to simply form alliances and friendship. As Schudson (2002, 145) wrote:

The relevance of a cultural object to its audience, its utility, if you will, is a property not only of the object's content or nature and the audience's interest in it but of the position of the object in the cultural tradition of the society the audience is a part of. That is, the uses to which an audience puts a cultural object are not necessarily personal or idiosyncratic; the needs or interests of an audience are socially and culturally constituted. What is "resonant" is not a matter of how "culture" connects to individual "interests" but a matter of how culture connects to interests that are themselves constituted in a cultural frame.

Precisely because popular culture discourse is produced, distributed, consumed, and reproduced in reference to various scientific, political, religious, and social aspects of everyday life, the articles herein could be said to possess an "aura" of resonance (Schudson 2002, 146). That is, they contain references to race, religion, and society that were expected to resonate with both Bahá'í audiences' understandings as well as within larger American religious and even secular discourse, to build upon and challenge such comprehensions, and to both reflect back to them and even purposely distort or change images of Americana. However, such "character and experience" is not a monolith, and the varied racial discourse of these periodicals gains resonance across multiple audience networks, reflecting a heterogenous if not an often contradictory and divergent messages when examined on the whole.

To map the varied meanings of American Bahá'í periodical discourse about race, as well as to gain a sense of how these varied stories can form larger coherent themes, I draw attention to the "formula story" (Berger 1997) and what Somers and Gibson (1994) call "emplotment." Together, these form linear and connected actions which people wield in order to define themselves within the ongoing stories they tell with others (cf. Polletta 2006). I contend that the a dominant and formulaic story of the modern U.S.

pertains to “race.” People use the race concept to help create and propel their stories, which makes for a certain level of narrative repetition. That is, narratives concerning race contain “symbolic codes” (Alexander 1992) or the “images of the rights, responsibilities, and normative expectations . . . Symbolic codes in the Western world typically construct one identity in contrast to another” (Loseke 2007, 666). Thus, patterned narrative representations of interracial interactions resemble what Gubrium and Holstein (1995) call “narrative linkages” or what Fine and Tavory (2019:461) more recently describe as “an isomorphism of situations, in which one situation mimics another in structure, but also provides influence as one situation sets the terms for others” (cf. Hughey 2021, 2014).

Racial Discourse and American Periodicals

American magazines debuted in in the 18th century. The first two, Andrew Bradford’s *American Magazine* and Benjamin Franklin’s *General Magazine*, began only three days apart from each other in 1741. However, *American Magazine* stopped publication after only three months. *General Magazine* lasted only six months. Many attribute this collapse to high publishing costs, expensive and slow distribution, and the relative lack of an American reading public (Straubhaar, Larose, and Davenport 2009). However, by the turn of the 19th century, over 100 magazines appeared in the still germinal United States. Despite the supposed democratic ethos of the U.S., these publications mirrored the literary journals of Europe and were largely considered highbrow venues.

However, due to technological advances in printing and the ability to attain cheaper materials, alongside the rise of literacy, more magazines began to appear and

some became successful institutions that marketed to niche interests and demographics, but which left a larger mark on American culture (Earle 2021). For example, one of the earliest specialty magazines was *Godey's Lady's Book* (1830 and 1898) which appealed to a relatively wealthy, White woman readership (Pattee 1966, 392). *The Saturday Evening Post* (1821-1969) offers another illustration. A weekly magazine, it quickly grew in popularity and had a circulation of 90,000 copies per year by 1855 (Tebbel 1948). And *Youth's Companion* (1827-1929) (which merged with *The American Boy*) featured rather unambiguous religious content of varied Christian points of view. Urging young men to live virtuous and pious lives, it became a popular magazine, with its consumption advocated by divergent groups, from abolitionists and temperance activists, to preachers and millennial spiritualists (Mott 1957, 273-274).

While these three magazines were popular, their circulation was limited by not only their niche content, but by affordability; in the 1880s most magazines cost 25 to 35 cents per issue (Hinnant and Hudson 2011). Yet, the real average hourly wage of an American worker in 1880 was 12.2 cents per hour (National Bureau of Economic Research 2022). However, over the 1880s and 1890s, magazine production costs fell. Magazines could reduce the price per issue, diversify content, and increase both readership and profit. Accordingly, *Collier's* (1888-1957) sold for 7 cents per issue, *Munsey Magazine* (1886–1929) sold for 10 cents per issue, and *Cosmopolitan* (1886-present) sold for 12.5 cents per issue. Frank A. Munsey (owner of *Munsey Magazine*) estimated that between 1893 and 1899 “the ten-cent magazine increased the magazine-buying public from 250,000 to 750,000 persons” (*Encycopaedia Britannica* 2022). The

relative ease of periodical accessibility made the 1890s the decade of true ascendance for the general interest magazine (Earle 2021).

By the dawn of the 20th century, alongside their ability to engage in serious and objective journalism, the newspaper industry had also become renowned for its social advocacy, moralizing, political propaganda, scandalmongering, and sensationalism. Magazines were becoming a progressively attractive and *en vogue* source for information among an increasingly literate American public. “With huge circulations and nationwide distribution, American popular magazines were arguably the first iteration of mass culture” (Earle 2021). These magazines were often seen as a marginally more focused—slightly more highbrow yet still accessible—addendum to newspapers. In the first decade of the 20th century, the now affordable magazine began to splinter into hundreds of specialty organs, each carving out a niche within its own genres and geared toward specific audiences with particular interests. For instance, *Collier’s* was marketed as a venue for “fiction, fact, sensation, wit, humor, news” (Mott 1957, 453-479) and established itself as one of the highest circulating magazines in the U.S. By 1892, it had a circulation of just over 250,000 and by 1908—the same year as the introduction of the first American Bahá’í periodical, *Bahai Bulletin*—*Collier’s* had a readership of over 400,000 (cf. Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991).

Racial representations in popular magazines and periodicals often evoked anxiety. Among the readership, some were eager to consume stories about race while others were wary and distrustful of how their ethnic or racial group would be portrayed (Gaines 2012). And simultaneously, editors were anxious over how race would grace their pages. Take for example, W. E. B. Du Bois’s 1906 essay in *Collier’s* entitled, “The Color Line

Belts the World”. Just three years prior, the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) made Du Bois a preeminent and sought-after voice in American public discourse. But in the context of the unease over the 1906 Atlanta Riots and the dishonorable discharge of 167 Black U.S. soldiers (known as the “Brownsville Affair”), Du Bois wrote in *Collier’s* that White domination of the world was in decline (citing Japan’s 1904 victory over Czarist Russia): “shall the awakening of these sleepy millions be in accordance with, and aided by, the great ideals of white civilization, or in spite of them and against them? This is the problem of the color line” (1906, 20) (cf. Hughey 2020). Du Bois’s essay sparked a good deal of backlash, and *Collier’s* blacklisted Du Bois among fellow periodical publishers (Lewis 1993, 503-04; Hughey 2020, 1308;). In response, Du Bois (as well as other intellectuals and writers determined to write critically and honestly about racial inequality) turned to more niche or focused periodicals in order to publicize their work. For example, *The Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line* (a magazine co-founded and co-edited by Du Bois) and *The Independent* (a paper edited by Congregational ministers and which took a decidedly candid stance on support for racial equality and women’s suffrage) became go-to venues for discussions of pressing social issues and controversial topics, whereby a blend of layperson, academic, business, political, and scientific voiced offered varied takes (Filler 1954; Ashton 2001, 3). This was especially the case for the contested concept of “race.”

Just as magazine periodicals were capturing public attention at the turn of the century, that reading public was both growing and rapidly diversifying. Overall literacy in English in the U.S. rose from 80 percent in 1870 to 94 percent by 1920. Moreover, Black literacy rates—both hampered by the legacy of slavery, Black Codes, and Jim

Crow but enabled by Reconstruction efforts—rose from roughly 20 percent in 1870 to roughly 75 percent by 1920 (U.S. Department of Commerce 1992; Snyder 1993).

As the reading public grew, media outlets reflected already-extant interpretations circulating in the main, but they were also constitutive of the nation's racial realities. They also mirrored specific and less-discussed interpretations on issues that were otherwise neglected or invisible in secular or Judeo-Christian dominated reading publics. Throughout the 1900s, especially in the first half of the 20th century, American Bahá'í periodicals were a part of this trend. Despite their existence and pronounced focus on race, they have been relatively ignored.

Procedure

In order to gain purchase on such a diverse and rather nebulous conversation regarding race in American Bahá'í periodicals, I employ a qualitative content analysis of nearly a century (1908-1949, 1966-1990, 1993-2007) of the four extant periodicals of the American Bahá'í religious community: *Bahai Bulletin* (1908-1909), *Star of the West* (1910-1935), *World Unity Magazine* (1927-1935), and *World Order* (1935-1949, 1966-1990, 1993-2007). The website “Bahaiworks” (<https://bahai.works>), a collaborative website that digitalizes English, French, and German historical documents related to the Bahá'í Faith, has digitalized copies of the American Bahá'í periodicals and includes a word search function, which I downloaded to my personal drive. Given that these articles were published and put into the public domain and remain publicly available (as well as the fact I am not interacting with human subjects for this study) the data is not subject to IRB regulation.

I constructed a population of suitable articles from the four periodicals by selecting articles (the unit of analysis) that contain either the terms “race” or “racial.” I searched the entire publication of the four journals for both these terms. Search results numbered at approximately 2500 results from across the 6 issues of *Bahai Bulletin*, 300 issues of *Star of the West*, 90 issues of *World Unity*, and 315 issues of *World Order*. However, I removed articles that are resources, poems, reprints of Bahá’í Scripture, and prayers, tablets or speeches by Bahá’í authoritative ecclesiastical figures and bodies (such as Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice, or the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States). I did not exclude articles that reference these or cite passages from them. So as not to construct an exegesis on Bahá’í Scripture itself, I only excluded stand-alone articles authored by these figures and institutions so as to concentrate on the discourse of the Bahá’í laity and the authors’ applications and interpretations of Bahá’í Scripture. I also excluded inapplicable results (e.g., uses of the verb “to race” or uses of “race” as a broad synonym for humanity), duplicates, reprintings, and in-passing references to “race” that have no discussion of race or racial dynamics. Once unsuitable references were culled, I was left with a study population of 266 articles (4 articles from *Bahai Bulletin*, 82 articles from *Star of the West*, 51 from *World Unity*, and 129 articles from *World Order*) (see Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 in Appendix 1).

With the study population constructed, I then engaged in a two-tiered qualitative and quantitative content analysis. First, based on the extant literature on race and the Bahá’í Faith, I employed a deductive approach to each article. This pass over each article pertained to concepts related to Bahá’í theology and race, such as, but not limited to,

“racial amity”, “oneness of humanity”, “pupil of the eye”, or “most challenging issue”.

This first stage afforded me insight into the social and cultural context in which discussions of race were conceived, written, published, and discussed.

Second, I inductively re-read each article to identify “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1954) that would refine the initial pass of the data. Scholarship on periodicals and newspapers accentuates the weight of constructions of truth-claims in relation to theories, facts, and either logical or empirical inconsistencies (cf. Macnamara 2005; Matthes 2009). Based on prior approaches (cf. Hughey 2018; Love and Hughey 2015): I thus focused on these periodicals’ patterned use of (1) assumptions (statements without supporting evidence), (2) assumptive paradoxes (statements involving contradictory suppositions), (3) empirical paradoxes (statements involving contradictory evidence), and (4) absences (missing statements in the face of evidence; they provide evidence but do not remark upon it or its implications) which together guided the findings.

Research Limitations

Scant factors potentially limit this research. Nonetheless, one hindrance is that scholarship on the Bahá’í Faith is growing but remains at a rather humble level. This relative paucity of academic sources is exacerbated by the even smaller amount of scholarly discourse on race and the Bahá’í Faith. Moreover, I have found no scholarship that examines Bahá’í periodicals as its primary data source. Hence, while my work aims to fill a rather large gap, it is limited by what would otherwise be entrée into an already-robust, scholarly discussion of the Bahá’í Faith, race, and periodical discourse. On the bright-side, this thesis is a forerunner in what is hopefully a growing conversation.

Another barrier is that the periodicals in my data-set have a few windows and gaps, particularly around the Civil Rights era and early 1990s in which race and racism were more explicitly mentioned in public discourse *writ large*, which will thus unfortunately disallow empirical study of Bahá'í periodical discourse during that period.

Finally, the sources of data and methodology generate difficulties of ascertaining a discourse's representativeness of the actual thoughts of American Bahá'ís. Given this doubt over whether media discourse can echo attitudes or ideologies (cf. Love and Hughey 2015), I avoid examination of these articles as if they were unblemished mirrors on social life, but instead study them as a crucial (re)productive mechanism of American Bahá'í identity. In this sense, my aim is to catalog the variation of discourse, as well as to identify how dominant racial logics that appear within these periodicals become constitutive of the racial-religious identity it purports to represent (cf. Hughey 2012). In what follows, I lay out the major shifts in these themes over time, with attention to both the historical context and the biographical background of the author, when known.

Chapter IV.

“The Nadir” and the Birth of *Bahai Bulletin* (1908-1909)

The first American Bahá'í periodical, *Bahai Bulletin*, appeared in 1908. It contains few mentions of race and racial prejudice. Yet even with a relative dearth of explicit racial discourse, the journal staked out a space that signaled the Bahá'ís Faith's embrace of racial cooperation and integration alongside the buttressing of Black leadership in the social movements for human and civil rights. Together, these stood in stark opposition to both the dehumanizing anti-Black racism of the day as well as the racial practices within the dominant religious voice of early 20th century United States—the Christian Protestant church—which sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois described as “Jim Crowed from top to bottom . . . no other institution in America is built so thoroughly or absolutely on the color line” (Du Bois 1970, 216-217).

The Context of Progress and Peril

1 January 1908 began with the first ever “drop” of a 700-pound electrified ball of lights from atop a flagpole at the *New York Times* building in Times Square. That day, the *New York World* published an article entitled “1808-1908-2008” to note the progress made over the previous century and to forecast what might happen over the next 100 years. Its tone was decidedly optimistic: “What will the year 2008 bring us? What marvels of development await the youth of tomorrow?” Many Americans seemed buoyed by hopes for newfound advancement. That year witnessed Wilbur Wright's two-

hour long flight (the longest made by airplane at the time), the U.S. Navy's Great White Fleet's circumnavigation of the globe, Henry Ford's production of the Model T car, and Thomas Edison's famous declaration, "Anything, everything, is possible" (cf. Rasenberger 2011).

However, there were significant barriers to such achievement, namely American racism. This was a time that has been described as "The Nadir of American Race Relations" (Logan 1965, 1954); a period bookended by the conclusion of Reconstruction in 1877 until roughly the epidemic race riots and racial terrorism of mid-1919, what James Weldon Johnson would dub the "Red Summer" due to the bloodshed in a series of race riots. During the time, many scholars argue, African Americans' social status in the U.S. had reached its lowest point (cf. Brown and Webb 2007; Foner 2002). *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established the doctrine of racial segregation, was only a dozen years old by 1908. Poll taxes and literacy requirements banned many impoverished People of Color from voting or holding public office. This was also the heyday of White vigilante groups such as the White League, Red Shirts, and the Ku Klux Klan, which aimed to weaken Black political and economic power through its use of assassinations and terrorism, such as the documented lynching of 89 Black Americans in 1908. Such tactics were used across the nation. For instance, in August of 1908 in Springfield, Illinois, two Black men were arrested as suspects in an attempted rape and murder of two young white women. A mob seeking to lynch the men learned that they been taken out of the city, at which point the mob spread out to destroy Black businesses and homes and injure and murder Black citizens, resulting in 16 deaths and the emigration of hundreds of Blacks from Springfield (Senechal de la Roche 2008).

Moreover, the racist tenor of American imperialism and hostile Northern White reactions to Southern Black migration marked “The Nadir.” The legitimization and rationalization of American imperialism manifested in racist, xenophobic, and paternalistic public discourse that it was “The White Man’s Burden” to civilize and save the darker races of the world. Also, White Northerners reacted to increasing arrival of African Americans during the “Great Migration” through racism both subtly institutionalized and explicitly interactional. Civil-government and private-sponsored racial housing “ordinances” and “covenants” (in which the sale of real estate to Black people in White-majority areas was prohibited by either the state or neighborhood associations) were implemented across many Northern cities and remained legal for decades (State-mandated racial housing ordinances were not struck down until the 1917 Supreme Court decision in *Buchanan v. Warley* while racial covenants remained legal until the Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948). Racism, particularly anti-Black racism, was at the height of its normality.

The *Bahai Bulletin* and Minor Allusions to Race

In September 1908, only one month after the aforementioned Springfield race riot, the first issue of *Bahai Bulletin* appeared. Published by the Bahai Publishing Society of New York, the 10-cent copy mentioned race in the second sentence of the “Editorial Comment”: “All the instrumentalities which bring race and race, religion and religion, man and man into closer and more sympathetic and profitable contact, are powerful aids to the pacification of the world and the building up of a higher and more God-like civilization” (*Bahai Bulletin* 1908a, 1). Despite this early mention of race, the *Bahai Bulletin* did not concentrate on racial matters. Rather, it immediately emphasized its

concentration on the promulgation and diffusion of the larger Bahá'í worldview and of making the journal a source for information of relevance to the growing numbers of American Bahá'ís. Designed to be “a Bahai organ . . . which will be devoted entirely to news of the Cause” (*Bahai Bulletin* 1908a, 1), the *Bahai Bulletin* did not specify what was meant by their early mention of race but urged contributions from the burgeoning Bahá'í laity:

It is sincerely hoped that our Believers everywhere will appreciate the importance of supporting THE BULLETIN and of contributing to its success, not only by subscribing to it and securing subscriptions for it, but by sending to the Editors from time to time news which in their judgment is of interest and value to the Cause. (*Bahai Bulletin* 1908a, 1)

Despite little mention of racialized topics such as segregation, inequality, or prejudice, there were some signs that Bahá'í periodical discourse would take up matters pertaining to social problems as related to both Bahá'í theological doctrine and larger stances on religion and spirituality as well as social scientific knowledge of the day. In the same first issue, a report on Bahá'í meetings being held in Canada mentioned that:

At some meetings the whole conversation took a scientific turn and the Bahai [sic] Revelation was introduced by the teachings of science; at other times it took the form of spirituality, and again, at other times, the conversation turned on the prophecies of the Bible. In this way a little seed has been sown this season which may grow into a healthy and good crop. In some cases the suggestion of the solution of several knotty problems of sociology and also of economic difficulties through Divine Revelation, strengthened by historical evidence, did not fail to make a good impression upon men of that turn of mind. (*Bahai Bulletin* 1908b, 12)

The next few issues refrained from mentioning race directly, although varied social differences and categories that had a racialized connotation were mentioned in passing. For instance, the second issue (a combined publication of issues 2 and 3 for October and November 1908) contains a letter from Ahmad Isphahani entitled “Washington” in which he explains ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wish for Bahá'ís in the West or

“Occident” (largely understood as “White”) to correspond with Bahá’ís in the East or the “Orient” (chiefly assumed “Asian”, “Middle Eastern”, or “Arab”):

Abdul Baha [sic] has at various times and upon various occasions recommended the Bahais [sic] of America to put themselves in closer communication with their brothers and sisters in the Orient, and for this reason He has commanded us to correspond with them as often as possible. For the last, three or four years the Washington Bahai [sic] Assembly has been carrying on a spiritual correspondence with the Bahai [sic] Assemblies in the East and satisfactory results have been reached and Abdul Baha [sic] has quite often expressed His entire satisfaction with what has been accomplished. (*Bahai Bulletin* 1908c, 13)

Also, in the fourth issue of December 1908, an article by Isabella D. Brittingham entitled “The Bahai [sic] Basis” enumerates some of the basic beliefs of Bahá’ís theology such as the tenet that Bahá’ís must “serve one another, and to know that all mankind are brothers” (Brittingham 1908, 13). Such vague allusions to human brotherhood and the unity of mankind were mentioned elsewhere, and would have resonated with any reader with a racial consciousness. Nonetheless, there were no other direct mentions of race in 1908.

It was not until the fifth issue, published in March 1909, that race was mentioned again. In “News from Acca”, Abucen U. Fakeed quotes from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” to emphasize the necessity of Bahá’ís to unify across social and racial conventions and antagonisms:

All the nations, religions, peoples, races, denominations and cults are at warfare with one another. The efforts of each are directed towards the effacement of the other The duty of the Bahais [sic] is that they should daily strengthen the bonds of love among themselves so that love many become their strongest point and their ‘Reserve’ power whereby they shall subdue the hatred, envy and malice of the nation. By love they must conquer the realms of hearts and minds. (*Bahai Bulletin* 1909, 6)

Relatedly, in another article from the same issue entitled “Bahaism: Its Ethical and Social Teachings”, E. J. Rosenberg (the first English Bahá’í) broached the topic of race, but largely in reference to foreign communities: “I must not omit to mention that Bahaism

[sic] is now beginning to spread amongst the natives of India and Burmah, where Its teachings are enthusiastically adopted by its adherents as a means of establishing real unity and brotherhood amongst the numerous races and creeds of those countries” (Rosenberg 1909, 11-12). Here, Rosenberg, a British Bahá’í, drew focus on how the spread of the Bahá’í Faith overcame and transcended established divisions and group identity in places held by the British Crown. Rosenberg yet concluded the article with the evaluation that a Bahá’í’s “first necessity” was “to associate with men of every race and religion in the spirit of true brotherhood, love and sympathy, and to acknowledge all men as seekers of the One Truth.” No other mention of race appears in either article nor is there additional description or contextualization of the concept.

Summation

The sparse attention paid to race (it is mentioned in only four articles across the six issue run of *Bahai Bulletin*, coupled with the surrounding society’s immense debate and discussion of race at the time, from lynchings and race riots to the 1908-1909 founding organization of the N.A.A.C.P. that took place in New York City where the “Bahai Publishing Society “was also located, should give one pause. The editors and contributors to the publication could have been ignorant of the debates and complexities surrounding the “race” concept and what they signified socially, politically, or theologically. They could have been unsure or unwilling of how to address the topic given its tendency to evoke highly politicized and sometimes incendiary reactions. Or, they could have simply been preoccupied with other matters; to focus on overtly “non-racial” aspects of life is part and parcel of the privileges of Whiteness.

Whatever the reason for the dearth of racial discussion, the few mentions of “race” that manifested in the pages of *Bahai Bulletin* represented a vague concept regarding human difference that should not serve as stumbling block to global unity and fellowship. The concept of race—alongside other theories concerning ethnicity, creed, and nationality—was seemingly used as a placeholder for identifying social forces that were not to serve as the basis of cooperation or identity within a Bahá’í approach to either community-building or theological understandings of human nature. Rather, the early mentions of race in the first American Bahá’í periodical were ambiguous conceptually, yet unequivocal in the discursive construction a worldview in which “race” was a potentially dangerous and powerful force that threatened to disunify people and pit them against one another.

While the emphasis on commonalities and inclusion illuminates a “strategy of unification and cohesivation” (Wodak et al. 1999), this stance proved a difficult position to articulate plainly, coupled with the fact that it found expression within the periodicals of a newly emergent religion that was, for some, a strange “Oriental” faith attempting to prove its legitimacy and necessity. As a consequence of the two-fold challenge of gingerly addressing race in the context of rife racial animosities and inequality while simultaneously avoiding either alienating readers or overly racializing a faith already navigating connotations of Eastern exoticism and spiritualism, Bahá’í discourse constructed a concept of race that appealed to progressive social ideals yet avoided association with racial radicalism. “Race”, as an abstract signifier, became a potent instrument in the toolbox of early American Bahá’ís. In reading *Bahai Bulletin*, one could easily stake out a social position that merged the scientific and religious in order to

decry racial prejudice through appeal to “the bonds of love” (*Bahai Bulletin* 1909, 6) in order to establish “real unity and brotherhood amongst the numerous races and creeds of those countries” without getting in the weeds of what exactly the contours of such love, unity, and brotherhood would look like. Such racial abstraction could certainly function in the interests of the majority of those who were converting to the Bahá’í Faith in the early 1900s: socio-economically stable if not well-off White men and women who fancied themselves a part of a distinct moral community apart from the wickedness of “The Nadir”.

Chapter V.

The “Race Amity” Era: *Star of the West* (1909-1920)

In marked distinction to *Bahai Bulletin*, the new publication of *Star of the West* addressed race early and often, frequently within the context of definite events and in reference to specific people. It also emphasized a new term: “Race Amity”. Shaped by varied Bahá’í-sponsored “Race Amity” conferences that would address the “race question” or the “Negro question” as it was commonly called at the time, Bahá’í periodical discourse suddenly explored questions of racial inequality and the necessity of racial unity, both as a goal and as a process. The American Bahá’í community was beginning to organize administratively at this time, which facilitated the focus on “race amity conferences”: American Bahá’ís held their first national convention in 1909, whereby they formed the “Bahá’í Temple Unity” [a leadership group for the building of the first Bahá’í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, which later became the first National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) of the United States and Canada in 1925]. Yet, just like *Bahai Bulletin*, *Star of the West* never defined the race concept directly. Thus, to gain a sense of the meanings of its usage, one must read the early accounts of racial matters in *Star of the West* didactically. The search for a definition of “race” that gelled with Bahá’í theology proved a sporadic, contradictory, and ultimately an unconcluded endeavor. Similarly, while the periodical discourse on prejudice and racism was slightly more consistent due to the scriptural imperative to abolish all forms of prejudice, discussion as to the causes, operations, and effects of racial prejudice were muddled. In

what follows, I map the varied discursive patterns concerning prejudice and its relationship to the Bahá'í Faith.

Interracial Cooperation

In only the second issue of *Star of the West*, published in 1910, Bahá'í cooperative activities with Black organizations in Washington, D.C. were mentioned.

While not many details were given, the article states:

The Bethel Literary and Historical Society, the oldest and leading colored organization in the city, devoted its session of Tuesday, April 5, to the Bahai Revelation, Mr. Hannen and Dr. Fareed, speaking on the subject of “The Race Question from the Standpoint of the Bahai Revelation.” This Society, of which Mr. Louis G. Gregory is President, has given three previous sessions this season to the Bahai Teachings, and this has exerted a powerful influence in the work among the intelligent circles of this people, whom we are commanded to reach and help as brothers and sisters. (Hannen 2010a, 13)

The Bethel Literary and Historical Society was founded in 1881 by members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and was renowned as an open space of African American society and debate (Gatewood 1990). Talks and debates on “the race question” were common and often involved discussion of the current state of scientific discovery and debate over the definition of race. When hosted by Black groups, discussion of strategies for Black racial uplift were common (Gatewood 1990). While no further information about the April 1910 meeting was given, the mere mention of cooperating with a Black organization to discuss “the race question” would itself signal the alignment of the Bahá'í community of Washington D.C. with rather progressive social ideals of the day. These were in distinction to the growing scientific racism of the era, most notably witnessed in the creation of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, that same year in 1910, as the home of the Eugenics Records Office (Hughey 2017, 21). Moreover, by 1910,

Washington had the highest percentage of African Americans of any U.S. city. Still, Jim Crow laws mandated segregation in public schools and recreation facilities within D.C. Even federal buildings would soon be segregated by Woodrow Wilson's executive order in 1913. While interracial meetings were not outlawed, they were sometimes considered risky and were certainly newsworthy. Accordingly, the activities of the Washington Bahá'í community in the very next issue of *The Star of the West* read: "The Unity Feast of April 9, previously mentioned as notable because it was the first where the white and colored Bahais [sic] united, was held and proved to be wonderfully blessed and successful" (Hannen 2010b, 19). Together, these meetings stood as early indications that race was a salient social category to be openly discussed in relation to Bahá'í orthodoxy and that Bahá'í orthopraxy would shun doctrines of racial segregation.

The simple linkage of cooperative Bahá'í activities with "integrated" and "interracial" communities continued for several years. Volume 2, issue 9 of the 1911 edition of *Star of the West* covered the "First Universal Races Congress," which met 26-29 July 1911 at the University of London. Accounts of the congress depict a decidedly rational and antiracist focus, with heterogeneous topics covered as participants and speakers at the Congress attempted to undermine negative racial stereotypes and reactionary concepts of race by employing arguments from evolutionary science, sociology, and philosophy, among others. Of the congress, the historian Elliott M. Rudwick (1959, 372) wrote, "The conferees were not unaware of the world forum they were providing for their newer racial ideas and of the prestige which the expressions of such a concentration of scientists and intellectuals were sure to evoke. Besides being 'scientific' the conclave was avowedly 'humanitarian.'" For instance, Brajendeanath

Seal, the humanist philosopher and chancellor of Mysore University, began the first session with his paper, “The Meaning of Race, Tribe, and Nation” (Seal 1912). The famed anthropologist Franz Boas destabilized notions of race purity in his paper, “The Instability of Human Types” (Boas 1912). The French diplomat and recent winner of the Noble Peace Prize in 1909, Baron d’Estournelles de Constant, offered his apologetic paper, “The Respect which the White Race Owes to Other Races” (de Constant 1912) and W. E. B. Du Bois presented his paper, “The Negro Race in the United States of America” (Du Bois 1912b). Importantly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was invited to speak at the Congress but could not attend. He sent instead a letter entitled “The Bahai Movement” along with Bahá’í representatives who gave presentations.

However, very little of the congress’s rich content about race was covered in *Star of the West*. Instead, in a “Brief Report of First Universal Races Congress”, Mr. W. Tudor-Pole first defended the labors of the organizers before critiquing the event: “What struck one most forcibly, perhaps, whilst listening to the debates, was the fact that the majority of the speakers forgot that they were addressing an international and inter-racial gathering, and spoke as if to an entirely English audience” (Tudor-Pole 1911, 1). Following Pole’s article, *Star of the West* included ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letter to the Congress, after which was printed an untitled essay by Thornton Chase. Chase, from a White abolitionist family in Massachusetts, was a former officer who served as a leader in varied U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War. After the war, he found work in insurance in Chicago and in 1895 he became the first American convert to the Bahá’í Faith. In his article in *Star of the West*, Chase stated that the Bahá’ís of Chicago had

received an “advance publication (a large book) of the papers prepared for reading at the first Universal Races Congress” (Chase 1911, 5). Chase continued:

. . . among them is one from Abdul-Baha [sic]. It is the briefest of them all, being very short, only two pages; and its character is entirely different from all the others. Theirs are largely from the point of view of country and race; his is universal. Theirs spends much time and words to tell of their ancestral greatness and the abilities of their land and race; he uses few words and little time to teach the *oneness* of all mankind, their individual and mutual duties, and the needs of the time . . . In brief, the thought of practically all of those who submitted papers to the Congress was from the human point of view, while that of Abdul-Baha was from the Divine Seeing. His was primary, theirs secondary. (Chase 1911, 5).

No clarification or definition was ever given to what was meant by race. Rather, the Congress’s focus on the contested meanings of race, the particularities of racial difficulties, and even their proposed solutions to racial strife were ignored and reframed as insufficient particularism next to the universal practicality of the Bahá’í approach, exemplified in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s message. Chase’s praise for the Congress was limited to how its interracial focus supposedly reflected, and perhaps was caused by, the animating power of Bahá’í teachings:

But it is a wonderful and glorious sign of the times and a proof of the working activity of the Spirit, that men from many nations, grown under different trainings, colored with different mental and spiritual ideas, should gather in such a congress, without political intentions, and only with the purpose of promoting the mutual acquaintance, respect, friendship, peace, and prosperity of the races of mankind. It is another of the fast multiplying proofs of the Divine Mission of BAHÁ’O’LLAH [sic]. (Chase 1911, 6).

Similar to Chase’s article, most remaining mentions of race in *Star of the West* would not define the concept but would labor to synthesize the growing instances of interracial activities that were guided by Bahá’í practitioners and principles.

The Abolition of Prejudice in the Making of “Race Amity”

The ultimate abolishment of prejudice of all kinds is a sacrosanct teaching within Bahá'í Scripture. As laid out in the Promulgation of Universal Peace, and first articulated during a September 1912 address at the Church of the Messiah in Montreal, Canada, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated:

According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh all religious, racial, patriotic and political prejudice must be abandoned, for these are the destroyers of the real foundation of humanity. He has announced that the religion of God is one, for all revelations of it are based upon reality. Abraham summoned the people to reality; Moses proclaimed reality; Christ founded reality. Likewise, all the Prophets were the servants and promulgators of reality. Reality is one and indivisible. Therefore, the prejudices and bigotries which exist today among the religions are not justifiable, inasmuch as they are opposed to reality. All prejudices are against the will and plan of God. Consider, for instance, racial distinction and enmity. All humanity are the children of God; they belong to the same family, to the same original race. There can be no multiplicity of races, since all are the descendants of Adam. This signifies that racial assumption and distinction are nothing but superstition. In the estimate of God there are no English, French, Germans, Turkish or Persians. All these in the presence of God are equal; they are of one race and creation; God did not make these divisions. These distinctions have had their origin in man himself. Therefore, as they are against the plan and purpose of reality, they are false and imaginary. We are of one physical race, even as we are of one physical plan of material body—each endowed with two eyes, two ears, one head, two feet. Among the animals racial prejudice does not exist. (1982, 299)

That address, given as part of the larger trip to North America by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s in 1912, emphasized His focus on both the inherent equality of the races, the dangers of interracial discord and prejudice, and a warning against “superstition”. Accordingly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá simultaneously advanced a religious, moral project as well as a claim to scientific rationality, merging both in His focus on racial equality. This double-barreled approach to racial equality remained a hallmark of Bahá'í theological constructions of

race, whereby “science” and “religion” were placed on equal footing and “in conformity”.

In the wake of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visit to the U.S., the “race question” was broached with more regularity as the *Star of the West* frequently emphasized His speeches that addressed race. For example, in an address to the Bethel Literary Society on 23 April 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated (in an address reprinted in *Star of the West*):

As I stand here tonight and look at this audience, I am reminded curiously of a bunch of violets, variegated in hues, dark and light, all bunched together in a fragrant and beautiful bouquet . . . For I see the colored and the white seated together in one audience, with perfect amity. The hearts are united. (1912, 16-17)

“Race unity” or “race amity”—as both a scientific and spiritual reality misunderstood by those engaged in the denial of either science or of religion—became watchwords of *Star of the West*. These terms would prove essential tools, especially as a global war stalked the horizon.

As World War I began in 1914, *Star of the West* focused on the need for global prosperity and peace. Mentions of “race amity” were often juxtaposed in relation to supposedly larger social conflicts, such as those impeding national and economic stability. So also, scientific racism and eugenics were gaining a strong foothold in the national consciousness, and they found increasing mention in popular discourse and growing application in reference to policies toward immigration, sexuality/marriage and citizenship. For instance, in 1916, Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* was published to wide acclaim and positive reviews. A viciously anti-Semitic book, Grant’s text bemoaned not only Jews, but non-WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) immigrants ,and racial miscegenation. He warned that “the white man par excellence” (1916, 150) was soon to disappear if the U.S. did not embrace even stricter laws

enforcing racial segregation. Racial segregation not only in public space, but in sexuality and marriage, was a core policy plank of scientific racism, which was often used to promote racist agendas that national unity and economic stability functioned best under racially homogenous nation-states. The same year that Grant published his racist tract, the American attorney and Bahá'í George Latimer published "The Social Teachings of the Bahai Movement" in *Star of the West*, which began, "The solution of our economic problems has long been considered a matter for the minds of philosophers and theoretical thinkers—a matter apart from religion. But social and economic questions are as much a part of religion as are prayer and worship . . ." (Latimer 1916, 132). With just a brief mention of race, Latimer juxtaposed racial identities, interests, and interactions as powerful chimeras that distract from the fundamental "spiritual solutions" to "economic freedom" (Latimer 1916, 135). "The world is perishing through lack of the spiritual realization of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man", Latimer wrote, before quoting from 'Abdu'l-Bahá that peace "cannot be founded through racial or patriotic power, for these are human powers, selfish and weak. The very nature of racial differences and patriotic prejudices prevents the realization of this unity and agreement" (Latimer 1916, 135). What exactly constituted the "nature of racial differences" was left unsaid. Suffice to say, Latimer seems to have meant that racial differences should be understood as essentially ephemeral and insufficient for the basis of a coherent and functioning society.

Throughout World War I and throughout the heyday of the American eugenics movement, American Bahá'ís periodicals frequently mentioned race as a stumbling-block to national peace. As a consequence, "race" was occasionally used as a loose synonym

for a form of national or regional identity and belonging. Consider an essay written during the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's birth (1917) by Louis Gregory, one of the first African Americans to convert to the Bahá'í Faith. Celebrating that milestone, and in echoing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prior emphasis on irrational beliefs and commitments, Gregory depicted how race was akin to a "chain" of "superstition", "error", and "imitation" (1917, 196) which the Bahá'í Faith was breaking and thus making way for inter-national unity based on a cooperative scientific and spiritual basis:

He [Bahá'u'lláh] also removed pride and the feeling of superiority of one nation over another He also removed racial prejudice, showing the races that their colors are like the different colors of birds and flowers. And so with national prejudice. He proved that the earth is one He freed the world from the fetters of misunderstanding and raised the banner of oneness of humanity from his great prison The kings did not heed his admonitions Had the kings heeded his warnings and protected their subjects, these great calamities of war would not have occurred. Do not teach the youth the prejudices of past ages. (Gregory 1917, 196)

By the conclusion of World War in 1918, the focus on racial amity had not lessened. The Bahá'í Scriptural principle that "racial, patriotic and political prejudice must be abandoned" in relation to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's focus on race during his 1912 trip to the U.S. was consistently reiterated. For example, in 1919, *Star of the West* printed a letter from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a Miss Anna Van Blarcom, which read:

When I was in America, I exerted a great deal of effort in order to promote a great harmony and union among the white and the colored, for men are like unto doves which associate in perfect concord and amity whether white, black, yellow or red in color. My hope is that this may happen among men. Consider ye, that color has been obliterated among birds, among whom distinction in color does not prevent intimate association. The same applies to animals which give no importance to color, but rather take into consideration the species Endeavor ye, therefore, to bring about absolute affiliation between the white and the colored. This variety in color is indeed an ornament. If in a rose-garden all the flowers are unicolored, what beauty may be found therein. Whereas if thou beholdest a garden wherein multicolored flowers bloom, infinite grace and beauty will appear therefrom. Likewise if the world of mankind were of one

color what preference would it have? Whereas multiplicity of color is an emblem of the Power of the Merciful. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1919, 28-29)

But how exactly would American Bahá’í periodicals frame the planting and nurturing of this multiracial “rose-garden”? Some examples took the shape of triumphant manifestos, even if some were accompanied by orientalist and condescending tones. For example, an April 1919 essay entitled “The Bahai Movement—is it the coming Universal Religion?” stated:

You will hear today of the Bahai Movement in every part of the world. Representatives of all races and nations are its adherents. If you are a Bahai, the name is open sesame around the world, even to the jungles of India. You will hear of the Movement, not only in every civilized country of the world, but in the outlying posts of civilization, in unexpected islands of the sea, up in Alaska, down in uttermost Africa, so universal is its diffusion a dynamic movement that penetrates, by virtue of its tremendous truth and vitalness, silently, ceaselessly, resistlessly, into the great heart of humanity (Masson 1919, 25)

Throughout much of the 1910s in *Star of the West*, “race” served as a proxy for outmoded national, regional, and continental differences that could only be overcome entirely, that is spiritually rather than simply materially, by Bahá’í teachings and conversion.

Summation

The first decade of American Bahá’í discourse on race was clumsy in many places, but decidedly Janus-faced. It continued in its initial strategy of “unification and cohesivation” (Wodak, et al. 1999) even as it introduced an emphasis on transformation; discourse aimed to re-create how race should be understood and marshalled in religious life. That is, on the one hand, race was a vague and rather undefined superficial element of human existence that distracted from the underlying spiritual unity and oneness of all people. On the other hand, *Star of the West* did well to accentuate novel meanings about

the importance of recognizing racial differences so as to intentionally integrate and unity across racial divides, regardless of social or legal conventions and inter-racial conflict whether local or global in scale. Yet, debates and dialogue concerning what “race” actually signified, beyond its function as a barrier to be overcome, would not begin to be addressed, even marginally, within American Bahá’í periodicals until the 1920s.

Chapter VI.

Individualism and Irrationality: Race in *Star of the West* (1920-1927)

American Bahá'í periodical discourse on race as an impediment to peace and justice not only resonated against the backdrop World War I, but also with the context of increasing race riots and racial violence in the U.S. Two years before the war's end in 1917, East St. Louis, Illinois saw at least 39 African Americans shot, hanged, beaten to death, or burned alive after being driven into burning buildings by White mobs (McLaughlin 2002). Two years later and as World War I neared its end, the "Red Summer" of 1919 saw race riots in over a dozen U.S. cities which resulted in over fifty deaths, leading W. E. B. Du Bois to state, "By the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land" (in McWhirter 2011, 14). And two years after the conclusion of the "War to end all wars" in May 1921, White vigilantes burned to the ground one of the wealthiest Black communities in the U.S (known colloquially as "Black Wall Street"), in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Tulsa massacre left over 35 blocks of Black neighborhoods and business destroyed and at least 36 Black people murdered. Just one year prior to the fall of "Black Wall Street", 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated of the racial turmoil in the U.S.: "Now is the time for the Americans to take up this matter and unite both the white and colored races. Otherwise, hasten ye towards destruction! Hasten ye to devastation!" (in Morrison 1982, 59).

Many American Bahá'í practitioners had taken notice and had begun, earlier in 1920, to organize meetings to address race. Accordingly, the Washington D.C. "House of Spirituality" (different names for Bahá'í administrative bodies were used in the early days of the Bahá'í Faith's growth in the U.S. On a local level, this would later be codified as "Local Spiritual Assemblies"), held a "Convention for Amity between the White and Colored Races", hosted at the First Congregational Church in Northwest D.C. A large building, with a capacity for 2,000 people, the church also had close ties with Howard University and a stalwart reputation for opposition to racial prejudice. The conference took place 19-21 May 1921, only days before the Tulsa massacre would commence on 31 May. The conference was the brainchild of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; preparations for it were begun when Agnes S. Parsons, a prominent white Bahá'í from Washington, DC who was on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, met 'Abdu'l-Bahá and was told "to arrange in Washington a convention for unity between the white and colored people" (in Haney 1936, 410; Buck 2011). Marian Francis Harris, an attendee of the convention, wrote about the conference in a letter to Agnes Parsons:

I attended every session, day and night, was one of the first persons to reach the church on the opening day and one of the last to leave on the night of the closing Many times throughout the meetings did with much effort restrain my tears. My heart leaped and throbbed and my [sic] times almost burst within my breast. Such a noble theme! Such a grand purpose! All hail to the noble souls at the bottom of such a movement. Much enduring good may result and I firmly believe will result. I am a colored man and try to view with unbecclouded vision this sad and serious situation. Earnest effort and much prayer will, no doubt, cause all the hindrances in the way to be removed, but time will have to be reckoned with too, I think. My race as a whole, I believe, is quite ready to welcome the glad day when all will be brothers. But so long as we are always reminded on every hand that we are black can we forget it? In hotels, in restaurants, in theaters, in the government departments, everywhere we turn we are told to remember. When the white man is willing to meet a black man as a brother and not as a "nigger" then we may look for that

glad day. The trouble is nearly unilateral. God give us the day. (in Buck 2012, 3)

Harris, an African American reverend and pastor of Mt. Hope Baptist Mission in Washington, DC, made explicit the role that racism played in the prevention of the recognition of universal brotherhood. Racism, assembled as a “trouble [that] is nearly unilateral”, prevented both White and Black people from interacting as equals. Framed as a spiritual and material problem cutting across the color-line, racism was constructed as solvable through an inter-racial commitment to the solution of “earnest effort and much prayer” as well as “time”.

Reverend Harris and Louis Gregory likely knew one another and shared this worldview. They both had worked for the U.S. Treasury, attended Howard University, and were active in cooperative religious social movements to address racial inequality (Buck 2021). Louis Gregory was also in attendance at the same convention, which he covered in the June 1921 issue of *Star of the West*:

The First Congregational Church, historically famous for its opposition to race prejudice, was opened for these meetings. The speakers, without exception, struck the highest note of duty, justice, freedom, love, understanding, broad sympathy, universal brotherhood, the abandonment of prejudices, surrender of selfish and limited thoughts in obedience to the Will of God. A majority of the speakers were those known as Bahais [sic]; but there were others, one in the same spirit, great souls who represented high stations in political, social, business or religious life, and true servants of God and the realm of humanity. (Gregory 1921, 115)

Explicitly inclusive of secular and interfaith voices, Gregory summarized each speech, given by luminaries in attendance such as Alain Leroy Locke (who had just prior converted to the Bahá'í Faith), Samuel I. Shortridge (a senator from California), Theodore Burton (a representative from Ohio), and Alfred H. Martin (President of the Ethical Culture Society of New York). Now only three years removed from World War I, some

indicated an “increase of prejudices stirred up among all races by the war” (Gregory 1921, 117), but overall, Gregory’s framed each speaker’s thesis as revolving around a central point: racial prejudice was based in irrational chauvinisms that had to be combated by intentional inter-racial cooperation and friendship undergirded by the common recognition of a spiritual or extra-worldly linkage of all humanity. For instance, Gregory reflected Alfred Martin’s solution to “the race question” could only be solved by “rising to the spiritual conception of democracy” (Gregory 1921, 118). For Martin, whose position was seemingly approved of by Gregory, this meant a pragmatic application of inter-racial assistance:

... the more efficient should help the less efficient. It is for the white’s [sic] of the North and the South to open the door of opportunity to the backward blacks, with no presuppositions of unfitness or inability to gain the prizes of citizenship for those who prove themselves capable; and the blacks in turn must serve as missionaries to those whites who are so victimized by prejudice that they cannot see the potentialities behind the dark skin. (Gregory 1921, 118)

But such pragmatism was wedded to a belief in divine assistance and that God would intervene in the lives of those that pursued racial amity. Writing of the speech by C. Lee Cook of Louisville, Kentucky, Gregory stated that Cook “dwelt upon the efficacy of spiritual citizenship, by which human problems can be solved. The spirit of patience and service must be dedicated to this end. Racial amity cannot be secured by pretense, but only by righteous conviction. We must advance through the hold orders of Providence” (Gregory 1921, 118).

That same year in 1921, a committee was appointed at the Bahá’í National Convention to assist with the publication of *Star of the West*, previously overseen by Albert R. Windust and Gertrude Buikema. The committee was composed by Charles Mason Remey (chair), William F. Slater Albert Vail, Carl Scheffler, and Martha Root

[with an editorial staff being Albert R. Windust, Gertrude Buikema, and Zia M. Bagdadi, with Mirza Alunad Sohrab (the Persian language editor) serving as honorary member (cf. *Star of the West* 13, no. 1)].

As a consequence of this reorganization, as well as the focus on “race amity” conventions and their coverage, the terms “racial amity” and “inter-racial amity” frequently appeared in the *Star of the West*, and within the larger American Bahá’í community, throughout the 1920s. The tone of discourse was excitedly optimistic that Bahá’ís and non-Bahá’ís alike were unified in carrying out the wishes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to address American race prejudice. Over 5-6 December 1921, another meeting on race was held. Again entitled the “Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races,” this conference was held in Springfield, Massachusetts. But before this conference was covered, the 12 December 1921 issue of *Star of the West* (12, no. 15) broke the news to American Bahá’ís of the 28 November 1921 passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Understandably, articles about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, reprints of his speeches and tables, and other mentions of His influence dominated the periodicals. Still, the American Bahá’í periodical discourse that had prior intertwined mentions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and race remained undiminished.

For example, in 2 March 1922 issue of the *Star of the West*, Louis Gregory eulogized the passing of an African American Bahá’í, Dr. Moses L. Murphy. Writing that Murphy was a “member of the colored race, [whose] success in both material and spiritual affairs was a credit to the human family and an ornament to the Divine Cause”, Gregory made the point to repeat Murphy’s deathbed vision: “Two days before the end, he reported that he saw Abdul-Baha [sic]” (Gregory 1922, 312). Whether intentional or not, Gregory’s mention of a Black Bahá’í as spiritually-attuned and blessed to have

encountered a vision of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, functioned both as a response to anti-Black racism and further cemented the attention to racial equality that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s both preached and practiced throughout His life. And in recapping speeches from the second “Race Amity” conference, a Reverend W. N. DeBerry was characterized as “an illumined soul who . . . has always been a staunch friend and supporter of the Cause” who “spoke powerfully” on the question of prejudice: “He outlined the pathway through which it could be attained: sympathy for defects of others, patience in not expecting a hasty solution, faith in the Great Seer to see the problem as a whole-and that Abdul Baha [sic] was such an one” (Williams 1922, 52).

Identifying the Causes of Individual Prejudice

As many American Bahá’í practitioners settled into a new era of the Bahá’í Faith, with Shoghi Effendi appointed the “Guardian” and leader of the religion, a focus on the nature and causes of racial prejudice began to take shape. The first speaker of the December 1921 “Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races,” E. F. Leonard (mayor of Springfield, MA) was quoted as saying, “From the remotest times there has been hatred and prejudice between races and the feeling is a relic of barbarism. We are all members of one great family, and there are no superior races” (in Williams 1922, 52).

Leonard’s approach to racial prejudice as a brutal, outmoded, and illogical aspect of the materialistic side of human nature dovetailed well with Bahá’í theology. Bahá’í Scripture articulates that every individual has two basic aspects or dimensions: the material and the spiritual. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá thus wrote that humanity has a:

spiritual or higher nature and material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his Divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1969, 60).

In this rendering, the rational and material aspects of humanity are inferior to the virtuous qualities of the “Divine nature” or “higher nature.” Juan Cole extrapolated on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s image of human nature as having inherited “a conception of the individual as theomorphic, as in the image of God” (Cole 2005, 62). Hence, these divine potentials within each individual become manifest in social organization: “among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1982, 132). Perhaps expectedly then, Williams’ recap of the speakers at the second Race Amity conference focused on prejudice as a manifestation of mankind’s outmoded traditions stemming from people’s “lower nature.” Citing “Rabbi Price of the Jewish Faith”, Williams stated that Price’s speech made the point that “There is no justification for race prejudice. It arises from the traditional distrust of the stranger” (1922, 52). Accordingly, Bahá’í discourse was slowly identifying the causes and reproductive mechanisms of prejudice, with a particular attention to areas deemed in need of both material and spiritual maturation and civilization amidst the U.S. south and southern hemisphere.

As the Bahá’í Charles Mason Remey wrote in “The Bahai Revelation - The Religious Need of the Time” in the Naw Rúz (new year) edition of the 21 March 1922 issue of *Star of the West*, “The object of the Bahai Revelation is the religious unification of all people Thus the Bahai Movement establishes the universal religion which is

the foundation of inter-religious, inter-racial and international brotherhood and peace” (Remey 1922, 9). This principle saw slow implementation in varied registers. For instance, the *Star of the West* reprinted an article (under the title “Resolutions Adopted”) from the 3 January 1922 issue of the *Advocate of India* that the Second All-India Bahai Convention passed a resolution to “start a Bahai Sunday School to teach Bahai lessons to children with a view to prepare them to work for the cause of International and Inter-racial amity and concord” (*Star of the West* 1922, 59).

With more Bahá'í-sponsored “Race Amity” conferences planned and well-covered, articles turned toward explicitly non-Bahá'í yet religiously- and morally-aligned endeavors to combat racial prejudice in the U.S. For instance, Louis Gregory’s 1923 article on “Inter-Racial Amity” was sub-titled “Spirit of the New Age Enters the South: Constructive Efforts and Marked Progress”. Gregory began on an optimistic note and with a direct reference to Christianity:

A bright volume of human progress is being written by white and black people of the South, who are working side by side, on a dignified plane, for amity and accord between the races . . . it is indeed heartening to know that in Dixie Land, elements that love God and humanity have evolved a plan of inter-racial action which works without friction. It is significant that men and women of both races are applying, as far as possible, the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount to the problems of race adjustment. (Gregory 1923, 304)

Gregory drew a subtle parallel between the values and morals of Christianity (especially Baptist Christianity which had a strong foothold in the U.S. South) and the Bahá'í Faith, through reference to the Sermon on the Mount (Book of Matthew, chapters 5-7). In these Biblical stories, Jesus articulates His elevation of the principles of love, humility, mercy, and deems His disciples the “Salt of the Earth” and the “Light of the World”. In corresponding fashion, Gregory then employed both the Hebrew and Christian testaments

to wax pseudo-biblically [“pseudo-biblicism”—coined by historian Eran Shalev—is a “style of writing that mirrors that timbre of the King James Bible . . . as a means to establish their claims for truth, as well as their authority and legitimacy in public discourse” (Shalev 2010, 801)]. Gregory underlined the power of God’s influence to transform the prejudiced and ignorant into open-minded and knowledgeable people, while he also slyly referenced the corrupting influence of power and prejudice via the “green bay tree” [a pseudo-biblical reference to Psalm 37:35 (KJV)]:

Easy it is in this day of turmoil to let dark news absorb the point of view. The world is distressed by notes of discord, which register moral decay, neglected education, ignorance flourishing like a green bay tree, sordid wealth fattening on helplessness, shocking scenes of mob violence, the intensity of race and class hatred. But there is also a bright, sunny side to life in every section. This is the real side of life and win always bear watching. The fact that there has always been an element in the South friendly to the colored race is very clear. The words and deeds of such eminent men as George Washington, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Bishop Haygood, Henry W. Grady, Bishop Quintard and Col. Dargan form a record of helpfulness and good will inspiring to any people. Perhaps the spirit of the old, chivalrous Southerner is well typified by Wade Hampton, Confederate General, Governor, and Senator from South Carolina. He proved his loyalty to his many friends, black and white, as long as he remained in power. At the moment of his passing to the great beyond these noble words were on his lips: “God bless my people all, white and black!” There is now a new element of leadership in the South, spiritually the heirs at law and successors of the old, with a large program and an influence far-reaching. (Gregory 1923, 304)

Gregory then proceeded to list the new disciples of a racial gospel as the “new element of leadership in the South” who are “spiritually the heirs at law and successors of the old”, such as “James H. Dillard, former president of Tulaine [sic] University”, “Prof. Morse of the University of South Carolina”, and “The colored organizer of the inter-racial work for South Carolina is J. T. Hodges, a man of keen intelligence and pious life” (Gregory 1923, 304-05). Note that Gregory cites education, via men of letters and universities, as a key element toward the elimination of prejudice. Conceptualized as

rooted in ignorance, and as a natural part of humanity's material side, racial prejudice could be eliminated through scientific education and moral/spiritual instruction. "What they are able to do thus far" Gregory wrote of the aforementioned Apostles in the fight against prejudice, "is not only great gain but the augury of a bright future. The effort to educate college students away from prejudices and hatred will be extended to the high schools as soon as warranted by means" (Gregory 1923, 305). The two-fold approach toward the use of both scientific and moral education toward the elimination of racial prejudice was then hammered home by the article immediately following Gregory's. Originally published in the *Fisk University News* and authored by Fayette A. McKenzie (president of the historically Black Fisk University), the article entitled "World Peace through the Discovery of One God" confronted the logic of polygenesis (a blend of evolutionary and theological ideas which posited that different racial groups descend from different points of origin, opposed to the idea of "monogenesis") and racial prejudice. Through appeal to the three central principles of the Bahá'í Faith (oneness of God, oneness of religions, and oneness of humanity), McKenzie wrote:

God the Father of all mankind is not the God of the Caucasian, nor the God of the Hindu, nor the God of the African. He is not the God of the East nor the God of the West; not the God of the North nor the God of the South. From the beginning until now God has been denied his sovereign throne by the tribes and the races and the nations that have refused to have a world God. There is only one God in all the universe to know. God is the one supreme goodness, the same everywhere yesterday, today, and forever. And just as God is always the same, so men are everywhere potentially alike. There is only one virtue among men, one integrity, one standard of measurement for thought and act and life. On a single tree, no two leaves are exactly alike, but the thousands of leaves are still essentially alike. Their common origin and their common life is evidenced in their common and unmistakable pattern . . . But remember, races essentially different cannot worship the same God. Races that worship the same God cannot remain essentially different. (McKenzie 1923, 306-07)

The Absurdity of Racial Definitions and Prejudice

Alongside the attempt to identify the causes of prejudice that supposedly lurked within the hearts and minds of individual people, American Bahá'í periodical discourse also began confronting racial discord more explicitly, even if what was meant by race was opaque. Rather than simply describe race, most writers critiqued and undermined commonly held lay or scientific notions of both racial difference and any of the supposed rationalizations for prejudice, hatred, or inequality. Many of the articles addressing “race” thus spoke of race not so much as what it *was*, but rather what it *was not*. Such negative definitions took sundry forms. For instance, in returning briefly to McKenzie’s aforementioned 1923 article, race was described as a poor and insufficient marker for different human traits or the supposedly immutable characteristics of humankind. Coupled to this thesis, McKenzie made the radical point that one’s belief in racial differences essentially made one a polytheist:

He who holds that his group, his race, or his nation is essentially different from others, and that he must hold to different ideals and practice different methods from others who worship the same God; he who takes such a position worships a local or a race God and does not believe in the One God. He is essentially a polytheist, not a monotheist. So long as this is true the Fatherhood of God and the unity of mankind are a beautiful dream, not a working reality. God the Father of all mankind is not the God of the Caucasian, nor the God of the Hindu, nor the God of the African. He is not the God of the East nor the God of the West; not the God of the North nor the God of the South. (McKenzie 1923, 306)

Similar claims were repeated throughout the 1920s, as *Star of the West* repeatedly undermined the thesis that race was a meaningful human distinction. For instance, in a 1924 issue of *Star of the West*, Coralie Franklin Cook (an African American Bahá'í, suffragette, music professor, and descendent of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings) penned “Finding A Basis for World Unity”. Cook took the reader through an event on a

University campus where she experienced varied interracial interactions that made untenable the concept of “race” as a marker for innate differences. In one instance, Cook (1924, 94) wrote: “Here you are of two separate and distinct races, but you are finding so much in common!” Cook also described:

“... a well known white woman from Georgia” who stands as “a living example of what it means to overcome,” spoke feelingly of inter-racial cooperation between white and colored people in the South. With amazing candor she described her own new “birth of freedom” when she had come to see the necessity of this cooperation, and had, with many misgivings “blazed the trail,” that has since been followed in many portions of the Southland with a success the significance of which stretches far beyond any sectional borders. Her story was Saul of Tarsus in woman's guise with a different background. (Cook 1924, 95)

Here, “race” was not defined so much as undermined as an essentialist or deterministic concept.

The newfound American Bahá'í periodical emphasis on the illogical and anti-scientific basis for prejudice and the vacuity of the “race” concept, combined with the spiritual and transcendent power of divinity to both combat prejudice and to know humanity and human nature from a kind of a-racial merger of objectivist or positivist thinking with a spiritually-supercharged truth-claim. Louis Gregory was a stalwart voice in this discourse. Writing in 1924, Gregory argued that racial prejudice is “obviously absurd,” before which he opined that racial prejudice could only be dislodged through the “principle of God”:

Evidences of life and hope on the one hand and of collapse and chaos on the other express man's acceptance or denial of the principle of God. The calamities and heart-aches of which man complains are for him a driving force toward his Maker. The breaking down of all plans of relief gradually eliminates all aid save the Greatest Name. This power alone can free man from himself and those idols of hate, fear, error, and superstition which claim his homage. It is obviously absurd for people to hate because of differences of weight and stature. Is it less so because some are French, others German; some white, others black; some Europeans, others

Asiatics? (Gregory 1924a, 299) [Of note, Gregory's use of the "Greatest Name" is a Bahá'í reference to one of the names of God, specifically it is *Bahá'* (translated as either "glory" or "splendor")]

Not content to end his argument there, Gregory made the synthesis of faith and reason even more explicit, and thus emphasized an essential agreement between science and religion on the question of racial prejudice:

. . . it may be interesting to note how the scientific lore of this age reflects the light of the Messengers of God: Sir Arthur Keith, of great renown among anthropologists, declares that the terms high and low do not apply to races, but only to civilizations. Jean Finot of the French school, proves the absurdity of race prejudice with the exactness of a demonstration in Euclid. Prof. Munroe of Japan, in one of his admirable lectures, shows how the different civilizations have been successively developed by peoples of all colors, rejecting the theory that there is inherent inferiority on the part of any race, past or present. It has been proved in many cases that children whose ancestors have been savages for many generations, if put in school and given an opportunity, can acquire the highest culture. But still woeful is the loss, if divine ideals are lacking. (Gregory 1924a, 300)

The topic of race was a key site for implementing, if not propagating, another tenet of Bahá'í theology: the essential agreement of science and religion as knowledge from the same source (God).

Gregory's, as well as other writers', focus on underlining the intellectual and spirituality vacuity of racial definitions and prejudice was seemingly bolstered in the wake of a 1923 reorganization of *Star of the West*. In April 1923, the newly-formed National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada received a letter from Shoghi Effendi (1968 [1923a]), the "Guardian" and leader of the Bahá'í Faith, who wrote:

Regarding the management of the *Star of the West*, as I have already intimated, this Bahá'í organ as well as other similar publications, far from being regarded as the special organ of a certain group or particular locality, should fall under the exclusive control of the National Spiritual Assembly, which, aided by a special committee, shall minutely guide and

judiciously scrutinize all the information it gives, the character of the articles and translations it publishes, and the tone and language it assumes in all its issues....

By the fall of 1923, the editorial committee overseeing the *Star of the West* turned over all editorial responsibilities and valuable assets to the newly named American NSA and Albert Vail was appointed as the new editor (cf. *Star of the West* 14, No. 8, 239).

Following this change, Shoghi Effendi (1968 [1923b]) again wrote to the American NSA on 26 November 1923:

With regard to the Star of the West, I have been impressed by the beauty and force of the various articles contributed to the Journal by Mr. Horace Holley and Mr. Stanwood Cobb, and would indeed welcome with genuine satisfaction an even more active participation on their part in the editorial section of the Bahá'í Magazine.

With an expressed intent to include writings from such critics of racism, *Star of the West* slowly began broadening the scope of what was considered a basic cause of prejudice. Rooted in ignorance and a lack of faith, racism was seen as susceptible to education, whether from formal academic training or from the edifying and didactic knowledge gleaned from unique life experiences. Both were identified as sufficiently able to challenge one's previously held dogmas and could force one to confront, and thus jettison, untenable beliefs. Accordingly, more subjective, first-hand, and reflexive stories about one's own thinking and pathways from prejudice lent themselves to better discussions of the phenomenological elements of education and spiritual transformation. In such articles, the authors were generally more forthcoming about one's own racial prejudices and how they unlearned them. These were invariably told as a journey composed of equal parts embrace of new information and education alongside the acceptance of a new religious or moral ethic.

Perhaps responding to Shoghí Effendi's praise of Stanwood Cobb's prior contributions, Cobb published another essay in 1924 entitled "Constantinople Days". Cobb emphasized, like many of the prior essays in *Star of the West*, both formal and experiential education as a method for recognizing the fundamental oneness of humanity. As Cobb made his own biography a springboard for the article, some background information on him is necessary. Cobb had completed his studies to become a Unitarian minister in 1906, after which he investigated the Bahá'í Faith and then declared his belief in it. Barely acquainted with the new, Eastern faith, he took a position teaching Latin and History at Robert College in Istanbul (then named Constantinople) from 1907-1910. Writing his article 14 years after his return from Constantinople, Cobb recalled his train-ride into the Ottoman Empire with romantic flair, self-denigrating humor, and othering exoticism:

I can remember as distinctly as if it were yesterday the thrill which I felt at sight of my first Turk, the officer who came on the train at the border to look at our passports. "Why, he is not a murderous looking fellow at all," was my naive remark . . . This was the first step in my experience of finding fact different from fiction . . . Does it not bear out the teachings of Baha'u'llah, to associate with all races in order to overcome the prejudice due to ignorance, that Americans and English, without exception, who chance to live among the Turks come not only to admire them but actually to love them? . . . But communion of the two peoples leads to mutual friendship and admiration. The prejudices due to ignorance and tradition vanish. Thus does the modern steamship and railroad train, by annihilating distance, cause the peoples of the world to flow together, bringing daily nearer the brotherhood of man. (Cobb 1924a, 809)

From Cobb's point of view, prejudice was unlearned not simply through unique and atomistic experiences, but through the development of stable "friendship and admiration". In this same vein, the broadened approach toward the abolition of prejudice was overtly outlined in another essay in the same issue of *Star of the West*. Louis

Gregory began his essay, “The Abandonment of Prejudices”. After briefly mentioning national biases, bigotries against Jews, and prejudices based in “hatred of classes, the foes of party, the systems of caste, economic jealousies, race prejudices, linguistic misunderstandings, the superficial barriers of color, sectarian bickering, religious fanaticism, and the almost uniform hatred which even intelligent people have for those who are supposedly ignorant” (Gregory 1924b, 11), he anchored his essay to the authority of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “‘Abdu’l-Bahá, with his luminous intelligence and universal spiritual insight has mentioned four ways in which prejudices may be destroyed. These are: 1. Travel. 2. Commerce. 3. Education 4. Religion” (Gregory 1924b, 11).

While education and religion had been discussed at length in other articles (some mentioned prior), travel was described as capable of bringing “people into contact with other environments” which “thereby opens a world of new thoughts and ideals. It enables distant peoples to get acquainted and removes antagonisms against other peoples and lands”, while the sardonically-named “Stay-at-homes in small communities, remote from lines of traffic” were characterized as often showing “strong tendencies toward bigotry and prejudice” (Gregory 1924b, 11). So also, commerce was characterized as such a boon that:

nations take on each others customs and thoughts and profit by the exchange The hermit nations have now all removed the barriers of trade exclusion. The West receives the goods of the East and to an extent hitherto unforeseen [sic] studies those ancient civilizations with their wise sages and spiritual values. And the nations of the East are learning to value both the wares and the modern scientific methods of the West. (Gregory 1924b, 11)

Without additional explanation or clarification, Gregory’s assessments seem rather naïve. Travel and commerce are framed as nearly utopian cure-alls. Moreover, Gregory failed to contextualize these within a host of historically and sociologically documented facts

about race and labor, known at the time, concerning the hostilities and prejudices animated by travel and trade, both on a larger geo-political stage as well as the intersection of race, migration, and labor in the U.S. Moreover, Gregory's essay frequently mentioned in tandem issues of race and class as powers of "self-interest" that must be fought by Bahá'í teachings: "What power today is far reaching and strong enough to remove hatred of classes, the foes of party, the systems of caste, economic jealousies, race prejudices, linguistic misunderstandings, the superficial barriers of color" (Gregory 1924b, 11).

To put Gregory's comments about race, commerce, class, and travel/migration in context, many of the previously mentioned race riots—such as East St. Louis in 1917, the riots of the Red Summer of 1919, and the attack on "Black Wall Street" in 1921—stemmed from White perceptions that African American migrants from the South (the beginning stages of the Great Migration) were replacing traditionally held White jobs and developing a strong if not self-sufficient economic basis for Black prosperity. For some White Northerners, Black migration was increasingly interpreted as economic competition and social threat. These racial anxieties were exacerbated by a burgeoning concern for how socialism and labor organizing—generally articulated in fear-mongering over the October 1917 Russian revolution—might take shape in the U.S. Accordingly, discourse about the intertwined role of labor and race, in circles in and outside of the Bahá'í Faith, were on the rise. For instance, in his 1924 recount of his pilgrimage to the Bahá'í holy land, Alain Leroy Locke adjusted his normal focus on race to that of "class and caste" in a *Star of the West* article entitled "Impressions of Haifa":

The household is an industrious beehive of the great work: splendid division of labor but with all-pervading unity of heart. Never have I seen

the necessary subordinations of organized service so full of a sense of dignity and essential equality as here. I thought that in the spirit of such devoted cooperation and cheerful self-subordination there was the potential solution of those great problems of class and caste which to-day so affect society. Labor is dignified through the consciousness of its place and worth to the social scheme, and no Bahai [sic] worker, however humble, seems unconscious of the dignity and meaning of the whole plan. (Locke 1924, 14)

In the same issue and just pages after Locke's essay, Horace Holley published "The Universal Solvent" in which he also remarked on the growing sensitivity to issues of class and race which might divide rather than unify humanity:

"Labor" feeds upon the opposition of "Capital," but "Capital" likewise feeds upon the opposition of "Labor." Classes, creeds, brotherhoods and other organized or unorganized interests develop and exist by reason of the same principle . . . the realization that unity and reconciliation are the supreme needs of the age. Without them, no group, no party, no interest, no association, no religion and no race can ever achieve even its own purpose, but all alike will go down in the same disaster of confusion and of strife. (Holley 1924, 16, 18)

In the mid-1920s, Bahá'í periodical discussions of race and class increased. This discussion reflected the rise of Northern, White-led labor unions' growing social and economic influence. These unions often used their organizing power to racially discriminate against the newly migrated Southern Black populations. In this climate, there was decided pessimism in the role that unions might play in the quest for racial equality. Quite the opposite, many saw labor movements and race movements as antagonistic forces with divergent interests. Accordingly, during the riots of 1919, Black intellectual and activist A. Philip Randolph called the American Federation of Labor (AFL) "the most wicked machine for the propagation of race prejudice in the country" (in Spero and Harris 1931, 390), while in the wake of the failed steel strike of 1919, labor activist William Z. Foster called African Americans "a race of strikebreakers" (in Foster 1920, 208). And in 1924, the very same year that Gregory penned his essay, the

N.A.A.C.P. (in which Gregory claimed membership) penned an article in *The Nation* entitled “Are Negroes ‘Workers’?” that bluntly read, “white union labor does not want black labor, and, secondly, black labor has ceased to beg admittance to union ranks because of its increasing value and efficiency outside of the unions” (N.A.A.C.P. 1924, 89). In lieu of a specific discussion about how travel or commerce could take place without racial animosity, and with evidence to the contrary regarding an increase in race-based violence in the post-Reconstruction years, Gregory wrapped-up “The Abandonment of Prejudices” with characteristic faith that increases in travel, commerce, education, and religion were putting racial prejudices into decline:

He confers upon man the power of self-analysis, so that he may ever struggle for the conquest of self . . . one can ever see steady gains over a period of years, as the larger consciousness, which is divine, reveals itself to human hearts . . . the people of light in this day struggle not only to free themselves, but the universal heart of humanity from the rust of prejudices and the fires of hate (Gregory 1924b, 20).

To be fair, overt discussion that could lend to political divisiveness or finger-pointing was *verboden* and was never a style of American Bahá'í periodical discourse. Bahá'í Scripture asks Bahá'ís to abstain from participation in partisan politics and to attempt to rise above its contentious, dis-unifying arguments: “Speak thou no word of politics; thy task concerneth the life of the soul, for this verily leadeth to man’s joy in the world of God. Except to speak well of them, make thou no mention of the earth’s kings, and the worldly governments thereof” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1982, 92-93). Accordingly, in a November 1924 letter to the American NSA, Shoghí Effendi, wrote:

The Star of the West, the latest issues of which I have read with genuine satisfaction, has admittedly made a notable advance towards the ideal which the Master has set before it. Articles on broad humanitarian lines, well-conceived, adequately treated, and powerfully presented, should have their proper place in every issue together with such accounts of the history and the teachings of the Cause as will portray to the Bahá'í and non-

Bahá'í alike the unique beauty as well as the compelling power of the Bahá'í spirit. Matters political and partisan in character should be carefully avoided as they would eventually lead to entanglements that would be not only futile but positively harmful. (Effendi 1968 [1924])

Even under such guidance, and for the day and the journal, Gregory's stance was idealistic, if not naïvely optimistic. Moreover, it would be absurd—and ironic given his aforementioned statement about “self-analysis”—to assume Gregory ignorant of the entwined racialization of travel, migration, labor, and trade, especially given the fact that the same year in 1924, Gregory toured the country for a number of speaking engagements, including one whereby he shared the stage with fellow African-American Bahá'í Alain LeRoy Locke (Hatcher 2019b, 35), who was then finishing-up what would be published the following year as *The New Negro* (1925). Whatever the reason for Gregory's interpretation, his stance was characteristic of *Star of the West*'s overall avoidance of pitting labor and race movements against one other. Rather, *Star of the West* regularly emphasized humanity's inherent unity and framed such supposedly natural or intransigent antagonisms as problems of moral and material misrecognition in which people had miscarried, either intentionally or by mistake, pursuit of their true, spiritual purpose. In regard to race, people either failed to recognize their fundamental unity and equality or, in regard to class, people did not respect the dignity of all workers or engage in meaningful and useful work for the betterment of humanity. In respect to the latter, consider Horace Holley's rather blunt appraisal of Bahá'í teachings on work and his depiction of the disastrous effects of economic inequality (inclusive of labeling the “privileged” capitalist class “parasites”):

A close study of this aspect of Abdul Baha's [sic] teaching indicates certain fundamental elements as conditional to the solution of the economic problem. One of these elements is the *universal obligation of useful labor*. Consider how idleness is condemned by physiologist and

psychologist today, no less vigorously than by the moralist and the student of economics. Wealth does not exempt any human being from the consequences of idleness . . . or even misdirected activity. These consequences are ill health of mind as well as body, and that disordered condition whose ultimate end is impotence or insanity. Moreover, in avoiding useful labor, the privileged classes and their parasites have deprived themselves of the very capacity for labor, while increasing that capacity in those who cannot or will not avoid work. (in this condition we may see perhaps one meaning of Christ's saying: "The meek shall inherit the earth." (Holley 1922, 168)

Given *Star of the West's* overall stance, it was not that travel, migration, trade, or commerce were *ipso facto* either banes or boons. Rather, their effect was determined by both the spirit in which these activities were deployed and toward what end they were directed. That is, travel, migration, trade, or commerce could work toward either the abolition or exacerbation of racial prejudice, dependent on its moral aims and pragmatic effects.

Accordingly, the very first words printed in the August 1924 issue of the *Star of the West* provided a slight addendum to Gregory's optimism. The editor of *Star of the West* (then Mariam Haney) penned an introduction, citing the scholarship of Sir Valentine Chiral of the Williamstown Institute of Politics, which began:

Grave danger confronts the whole human race . . . unless some way can be found to a peaceful readjustment of relations between the Occident and Orient. Never before, he says, has the white man stressed the color bar as he does today as the rampart of his racial superiority. Never before has the Orient denied his claim to racial superiority so emphatically as it does today. (Haney 1924, 123)

And rather than emphasize how the meeting ground of travel and trade between different races and nations would invariably lead to the decline of prejudicial attitudes, the editor remarked the opposite: "Thus it would seem that the struggle between races reaches its bitterest point where the races are most dissimilar" (Haney 1924, 123). But Haney then

abruptly shifted tack and disregarded the prior solutions of education (experiential or formal), travel, and commerce, and introduced “love” as the cure to prejudice:

There is only one possible remedy that occurs to the discriminating mind. It is the remedy suggested centuries ago by an Asiatic and reaffirmed a generation ago by another Asiatic. It is the remedy of love. Baha'u'llah in promulgating His great principle of abolition of racial prejudice and the unity of all mankind is but amplifying and fulfilling the message of love which Christ put forth . . . Orientals and Occidentals, of every clime, race, and creed, are finding a bond of love in the Cause of Baha'u'llah and daily proving that sympathy can take the place of prejudice, and that unity can supplant discord. (Haney 1924, 123)

Reminding the reader of Christianity’s prior emphasis on love, the editor supercharged the notion of love, transforming it into a divine gift and reconceptualizing God’s messengers as Holy physicians who have properly diagnosed humanity’s sickness of prejudice.

Given Holley’s prior-mentioned citation of Psalms 37:11 (“the meek shall inherit the earth”) alongside Haney’s evocation of Christ’s love (a possible subtle reference to John 4:19), it is worth a brief mention as to why it was so common for discourse on race in *Star of the West*, as a periodical overseen by Bahá’í ecclesiastic authority and ostensibly written for Bahá’ís, to so frequently evoke Christianity. Several reasons exist. First, theologically, the Bahá’í Faith operates under a millennialist framework, with Bahá’u’lláh understood as the return of Jesus Christ. This claim also underpins the unifying notion of “progressive revelation” or the theory that all faiths originate from God and simply build upon the prior-revealed faith. Second, and more pragmatically, many of the Bahá’í practitioners operating in the U.S. converted from Christian backgrounds and were familiar with Biblical stories and parables. Moreover, while *proselytization* is strictly forbidden in the Bahá’í Faith, *teaching* about the Faith remains a commandment to believers. Hence, many Bahá’ís were most familiar with how to teach

and relate the tenets of the Bahá'í Faith to Christian audiences. Third, the frequent evocations of Christianity functioned to de-exoticize the Bahá'í religion in the context of early 20th century U.S. That is, while Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá'í Faith all lay claim to a genealogy of the Abrahamic traditions of the Book, the emphasis on Christianity labored to neuter any possible orientalist prejudices associated with the immediate parent religions of the Bábi Faith and Islam. Fourth, the American Bahá'í community's explicit support for racial equality and its early alignment with the Black freedom struggle, made natural alliances with the Black Protestant church as well as forged friendly and cooperative associations with Christian churches who placed the "race question" at the forefront of their Christian practices.

This is not to suggest that all or even a majority of references to love or religion in the context of destabilizing the concept of race and the logic of racial prejudice relied upon pseudo-biblicism or explicit references to Christianity. For instance, on 25 October 1924 the fourth of the "Race Amity" conferences began in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and not coincidentally—only one day after the Society of Friends (The Quakers) held a conference on inter-racial justice on 24 October 1924 (the first Race Amity Conference was held in Washington, D.C., the second in Springfield, MA., and the third in New York City). *Star of the West* covered both conferences as well as mentioned Bahá'í support of similar efforts by the N.A.A.C.P. and the National Urban League, and others.

In regard to the 1924 "Race Amity" conference, Louis Gregory wrote in *Star of the West* that its purpose was "to awaken the people of America to the need of a clearer understanding of interracial problems, and a deeper realization of their spiritual solution as set forth in the teachings of the world's greatest Prophets and Teachers" (Gregory

1924c, 262). In this rendering, the common denominator across the varied speakers' was the implementation of principles of love and unity into everyday practice in order to combat the "egotism" at the heart of prejudice. Notably, the same points about the danger of egoism in facilitating prejudice were reiterated in other articles over the following years (e.g., Teikichi Satow's 1925 article "The Divine Center Essential to Peace"). Similarly, Alain Leroy Locke was reported as saying to the conference attendees: "When the merits of different races are understood they will bring a kinship of humanity. We shall not then consider superficial differences, nor deny basic unity In religion we are interested only intellectually and render only lip-service if we do not regard the stranger as our brother" (Gregory 1924c, 273). This evaluation was perhaps articulated best by Gregory's encapsulation of Philadelphia Judge John M. Patterson's remarks, which I quote at length:

Man is an egotist. Each family thinks itself the best family each race the best race, etc. This is all based upon egotism One hundred and fifty years ago tolerance was attempted by a government when the American, democracy tried it. All men were declared free and equal. Yet they did not apply this principle to the colored people. The Constitution of the United States also in theory makes all men free. Yet in actual, everyday practice, you and I know that freedom does not prevail It is an old human idea that one people are better than another But this congress upholds a standard. Let us take into life the things we learn here. My mother taught me to have no prejudices. During my boyhood I played with a Jewish boy and a colored boy. One night my mother persuaded their mothers to let them stay at our home, and the three of us, the Jewish boy, the colored boy and I, all slept together in one bed. Real democracy is carrying into practice the things we teach. God put the other fellow on earth as well as ourselves. Let your charity never fail! Help the children and the elders, whether of one race or nationality or another. Love does not know color or creed. We can carry out the spirit of this meeting whether we call ourselves Christians or Baha'is. (Gregory 1924c, 273-74).

Both Locke and Patterson were well known, but it was Patterson who had earned a reputation in Philadelphia as a charitable person, fair judge, and even as a local hero.

He was recorded in local newspapers as diving-off of the Atlantic City pier to rescue a drowning man in 1903 and running-up to the third story of a burning building to save a child in 1909 (in Crawford and Crawford 2022, 15). With such a reputation in tow, he commanded attention. He ended his speech by taking questions from the audience, to which he remarked on his feelings about Southern race oppression, that he was simply “too busy to hate” (Gregory 1924c, 274). And at the convention, Gregory himself remarked that prejudice would decline only with a simultaneous praise of the good in others, regardless of one’s faults. Specifically, Gregory stated that the “colored race” should “acknowledge ever the greatness of the white man's civilization and the benefits which have flowed therefrom through contact” while also the “white race” should “more readily appraise the merits and progress of the colored race and be moved to open greater doors of opportunity and to remove the unreasonable barriers of prejudice” (Gregory 1924c, 274). As a consequence of this praise, Gregory opined, the races would be “drawn together in mutual appreciation and good will, as befits children of the One Father, all elements of discord will vanish” (Gregory 1924c, 274). Locke, Patterson, and Gregory’s take, as articulated in *Star of the West*, drew attention to the place of virtuous behavior in combating prejudice. Prejudice was, as these pages described, a spiritual sickness and irrationality which plagued individual minds and souls. It was to be combatted on the personal, micro, and interactional level.

However, writers in *Star of the West* address of the contextual background of such battles often led to a reproduction of unexamined racial assumptions. Bahá’í popular discourse sometimes reproduced the very White supremacy and normativity it supposedly decried. Take for instance Stanwood Cobb’s 1924 article “The Future of the Indian

Race,” in which he praised recent archeological discoveries concerning the civilization and accomplishments of indigenous peoples of North America by citing in detail an article by Ernest Gruening in the February 1924 issue of the *Century*. Yet, in doling praise to the accomplishments of “the native populations of Mexico,” Cobb used prose that both assumed the readers of *Star of the West* were White and that White civilization was the norm against which other races should be compared:

Such a view [referring to Gruening’s article] as this is encouraging. It shows a true humility and a disposition to give due credit to other races than *our own* [my emphasis]. It is a wholesome thing for the white race, which suffers from exaggerated egotism, to realize that but a few centuries ago other races had as high a civilization as *our own* [my emphasis]. (Cobb 1924b, 368)

Aside from racialized assumptions of readership, one might afford Cobb the benefit of the doubt that he was speaking of the “white race” and its “high” civilization satirically or tongue-in-cheek. Yet, his words only lines later dispel this good faith assumption. Doubling down on his beliefs in White accomplishments as normative, Cobb pronounced the state of White racial achievements the globe over, the result of successful moral struggle through devotion to Christian faith:

Cruel as the Spaniards were, the race they conquered [Aztecs] was still more cruel and relentless. The author is of the opinion that in time the Aztec race would have evolved out of its cruelty. But how? It is but the pure teachings of Christ, and the endeavor, however poor and feeble, of Western civilization to put into practice his precepts of sympathy and mercy and to emulate his life of loving service which have raised the white race to its high place in the world culture. (Cobb 1924b, 368)

This is a striking move, given the cursory mention of Spanish colonization that Cobb somehow removed from the factors that led to Western civilization’s ability to gain dominance in the world. The colonialization promulgated by the Treaty of Tordesillas, the looting of lands by conquistadores such as Cortéz, Pizarro, de Soto and more, and the

White settler colonialism and annexation that would undergird centuries of Mexican history, are exiled from the causes of European dominance. In its place Cobb gifts “pure” religious commitment and moral rectitude to the “white race.” It is in this context that Cobb’s closing remarks are as self-aggrandizing as they are short-sighted: “Baha’is can see further than others, perhaps, the wonderful possibilities of this Indian renaissance, for they know the future holds marvelous things in store for every race” (Cobb 1924b, 369).

Similar explanations for geo-political racial inequality are found in Martha Root’s 1925 *Star of the West* article on Cape Town, South Africa in which she wrote:

The true reason why this beautiful continent of South Africa, once in the advance guard of civilization, is now at the rear is because her people have not had a Divine Messenger since the days of Enoch. She needs the dynamic impulse of a great World Teacher in this day—and Baha’u’llah has come with his Universal Message to the whole world. (Root 1925, 466)

Curiously, Root, a White American and graduate of Oberlin College and the University of Chicago who served as renowned traveling teacher of the Bahá’í Faith, left unexplained how or why areas of the Middle East—which Bahá’ís recognized as the recent homes of “Divine Messengers” such as Muhammad, The Báb, and Bahá’u’lláh—were less politically or economically stable or well-off (i.e., “at the rear”) in comparison to Root’s native U.S. Rather, both Cobb’s and Root’s essays exemplify the tendency to assume and normalize moral and spiritual superiority in White dominated areas as well as explain that areas dominated by People of Color were suffering, backward, or immoral (in comparison to “Western civilization”) because of their lack of contact with the “Universal Message” from Messengers of God, whether it be Christ, Enoch, or Bahá’u’lláh. Such discourse constructed a White normative and racial double-standard:

White people were implored to use their agency to unlearn prejudice and see through the mirage of race with the help of Divine teachings, while many People of Color had little agency to do so because they did not possess contact with Divine.

Regardless of the racialized assumptions brought to bear in this discourse, much of the mid-1920s discussions signaled that only through individual commitment to upright standards of moral rectitude and fair dealing could racial prejudice be upended. Given the aforementioned double-standard, such a focus on prejudice as a problem of individual souls that had failed to understand either scientific or spiritual truths, occasionally lent to the construction of rather contradictory prose. For example, in returning briefly to Martha Root's 1925 article on South Africa, she dissected many of the social issues pertaining to the city, state, and continent: from development of infrastructure among the "South African Railway and Harbours' authorities" to economic trade and production whereby "more than one half of the gold of the world comes from South Africa" (Root 1925, 464). Root even addressed the causes and consequences of war, migration, and cultural influence: "In Africa, invasion, whether Phoenician or Greek, Roman or Persian, established regimes splendid in their day, but they did not last. Instead of setting their stamp on Africa, slowly but surely it set its stamp upon them" (Root 1925, 464). Then Root again broached the subject of race. First noting the hostilities between the English and Dutch and the racial category system of "White", "Black", and "Coloured" she then wrote, "Prejudices between the white races and between the white and blacks and between the white and the orientals, prejudices also in religions, in politics, in economic questions are in the noon-day of their strength" (Root 1925, 465). Unlike her prior discussion of infrastructure, economics, agriculture, culture,

migration, and more, she then introduced a *deus ex machina* in the form of an unnamed journalist:

The writer [Martha Root], when talking to one of the women editors of the Cape Town papers, said: “What is your solution for all these big problems of your South Africa?” She replied: “I don't know unless maybe it is this Baha'i world religion with its basic principles you are lecturing so much about. I don't think anything else will ever solve them.” That is it! The Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, World Educator, IS the only power that will make South Africa the Garden of God . . . (Root 1925, 465-66).

Racial prejudice never seemed to merit the same discussion of causes, consequences, and strategies for their alleviation as did other issues. Rather, the simple adoption of the “Baha'i world religion” could, akin to a silver bullet, kill the monster of racial prejudice. Such an over-simplified and literal “magic” approach was spelled-out in the very next article following Root's. “The Point of Contact” by Dr. Orrol L. Harper thus reads:

This world movement for peace is so universal, so all-inclusive, that every race, every religion, every human individual, can find in it a remedy for differences. The secret of this accomplishment is very simple and very wonderful. It can be expressed by one magic word, “contact.” A true Baha'i seeks the subtle “point of contact” with every race, with every nationality, with every religion, with every individual . . . Ignorance, prejudice and difference lose their identity in the atmosphere of the Baha'i teachings (Harper 1925, 486)

While religious periodicals could not be expected to shun their faith as the solution to myriad problems, this does not address why such sparse discussion was given to the nuance of racial prejudice when compared to other topics, even class and gender. For example, concluding the very same 1925 issue of *Star of the West*, a two-part article on “World Thought and Progress” contained an analysis of arbitration and labor issues in relation to the stance of the Arbitration Society of America alongside a discussion of the

gender equality, motherhood, and prohibition in relation to the perspectives of the International Council of Women.

The focus on individual agency was frequently reiterated. For instance, in her 1925 article “The Abandonment of Prejudice”, Barbara Probasco argued, it is when human beings “value people for what they are and not for the color of their skin” that “race prejudice disappears” (Probasco 1925, 371). In American Bahá’í periodical discourse, it was only through obedience to God’s teachings—received from Messengers of God—that one could achieve and maintain such a standard and relationships in one’s life.

The same faith in the transformational power of God’s Messengers was marshalled to explain the newfound reconceptualization of the very category of “race”, as little more than an incoherent fiction and distraction from the fundamental unity of humanity. For instance, Louis Gregory crafted an argument merging the Bahá’í theological contention that the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh released spiritual energies into the world, which then influenced scientific advances that debunked racial differences in biology:

All are given the right to true strength through the Might of God. “*The beloved of God are those in whom the Word of God taketh effect.*” For those who prize spiritual values this is enough. Yet it may be interesting to note how the scientific lore of this age reflects the light of the Messengers of God: Sir Arthur Keith, of great renown among anthropologists, declares that the terms high and low do not apply to races, but only to civilizations. Jean Finot of the French school, proves the absurdity of race prejudice with the exactness of a demonstration in Euclid. Prof. Munroe of Japan, in one of his admirable lectures, shows how the different civilizations have been successively developed by peoples of all colors, rejecting the theory that there is inherent inferiority on the part of any race, past or present. (Gregory 1924a, 300)

This strategy found expression again a year later in *Star of the West's* publication of radio talk by Isabella Brittingham (an early convert to the Bahá'í Faith in the Chicago area) who stated:

In this country [USA], there are millions of illiterates, a number being of old American stock. In South America, where the white race is literate, there is great lack among the other races. As for Europe, Asia, Africa, the need for education is too evident to admit of argument When every race has equal educational opportunity, then labor will assume a newly adjusted attitude in the concepts of the human family. Character training, forming an integral part of the new education, will destroy prejudice, and the golden daybreak of true brotherhood and universal peace will be ushered in upon a storm-tossed world. (Brittingham 1925, 300)

But it was Louis Gregory who made the point time and time again. In a 1926 *Star of the West* article entitled “The Oneness of Mankind” he wrote: “For all races have the same potentialities: there are differences of degree, differences of opportunities for acquiring culture, but it is yet to be proven, from any scientific angle, that any race or tribe of the world has accomplished something that is impossible to others” (Gregory 1926, 114). He again reiterated this point later in the year in a different article, quoting Albert Vail of Chicago who had remarked:

The physiologist finds no basis for the claim of race superiority in the creation of man. There is no difference in the average sizes of the brains of men white and black. Again, psychologists have made careful intelligence tests of a large number of white and colored children with results that are practically equal for both groups. Step by step, therefore, we climb upward to the spiritual view, that the only superior man is he who loves most and serves most. (Gregory 1926, 380)

The thesis that one could ‘love-away’ racial prejudice was repeated evoked. For example, such a rendering of the irrationality of racial prejudice, alongside the enchanted power of love as its remediation, was reiterated in the 1927 article “The Abolition of Prejudices” by Florence A. Clapp: “When human beings are filled with the Love of God, they will have no prejudices whatsoever, all prejudices will be abolished, all men will

become as brothers, all nations one—one in so far as love for each other is concerned” (Clapp 1927, 114). Clapp continued with overt and unsettling language to confront the ethnic and racial epithets used to distinguish racial types from one another: “The time was coming, and far distant, when people would no longer speak of ‘dagoes’, ‘paddies’ or ‘micks,’ ‘chinks,’ ‘Japs,’ ‘coons,’ etc., but that they would have a more respectful attitude, more brotherly love; they would not look on others as foreigners” (Clapp 1927, 114). Such language was infrequent in *Star of the West*, but it did signal a change coming to Bahá’í periodical discourse on race. Racial types, traits, stigmas, and stereotypes would soon be overtly engaged and contested as people sought to communicate what they meant by the strange concept of “race.”

Summation

Race was a paramount and public issue of the day. In 1926, the Ku Klux Klan experienced a marked resurgence, and demonstrated its prowess with a long parade of white-hooded people marching through Washington, D.C. That same year Clarence Darrow (who had gained national prominence during the Scopes “monkey trial” of 1925) successfully gained an acquittal for a Black Detroit physician, Dr. Ossian Sweet, who was facing trial for murder after his family fought off a mob of White attackers. And also that year, the University of Chicago sociologist Robert E. Park coined his famous “cycle of race relations” in which he argued racial prejudice would decline after experiencing first “contact”, then “competition”, next “accommodation”, and finally “assimilation” (Park 1926, 150). With race and racism prominent fixtures of American life, the discourse in *Star of the West* framed both racial prejudice and the very concept of race itself, as based in irrational and immoral beliefs. Such theories were assailable, through

both attention to positive, moral ideals and through vague appeals to science as finding race an incoherent category, rather than a concentration on the unpleasant realities of racism or on the complicated details of social scientific studies about the causes of racial inequality. In this sense, discussion of the existence of race or the operations of racial prejudice within *Star of the West* sometimes read as hopelessly idealistic, if not a form of either Bahá'í apologetics or religious propaganda. Even with a concern for sidestepping engagement in partisan politics, the lack of details or even cursory mention of crucial dilemmas and problems endemic to American race prejudice appeared strategically absent. Consider that over the entire publication of *Star of the West*'s 25 volumes (1910-1934) key topics related to prejudice were either entirely absent or only cursorily mentioned. For example, "race riot" was mentioned only twice, while racial "segregation" and "lynching" were each mentioned only three times. Especially regarding the latter, lynching was a national epidemic, facilitated by vigilante and terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Red Shirts, and other White nationalist organizations. Statistics provided by the archives at Tuskegee Institute, regarded the most conservative by historians, calculates that 1020 people (875 of which were Black people) were lynched in the U.S. from 1910 to 1934 (Gibson 2010)—the same period in which *Star of the West* was active.

After 1927, there was a marked decline, other than brief mentions decrying prejudice *writ large* as antithetical to Bahá'í principles, of detailed discussion of racial prejudice in *Star of the West*. That is, with rare exception (discussed later) engagement with the antecedents, functions, and consequences of racial prejudice all but halted. Such restrained discourse functioned to downplay any sustained concentration or dwelling on

unpleasant facts or myths about racial prejudice, segregation, and inequality. In its place, there emerged a buoyant and hopeful tone that underlined the discourse of *Star of the West*. Such sanguinity was put in the service of reiterating a central goal of the Bahá'í Faith—the unification of the world under the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. But, as the next chapter details, the emergence of new Bahá'í periodicals (*World Unity* in 1927 and *World Order* in 1935), coupled with both the maturation of the social sciences and eugenics and their filtration into public consciousness, made for a resurgent debate over how to understand both the nature of “race” and “racial prejudice” in relation to Bahá'í praxis.

Chapter VII.

Racial Confusion in *Star of the West* and *World Unity* (1927-1935)

As the roaring twenties progressed, American Bahá'í periodical discourse on race began to slowly distance itself from *Star of the West*'s two-fold focus on, first, the conceptualization of race as a little more than an irrational and incoherent categorical system, and second, the faith placed in personal and agentic strategies to invest in love, travel, sustained contact, and the other individual remedies to prejudice. Perhaps this was due to a shift in editorial direction of *Star of the West*. A 20 February 1927 letter from Shoghí Effendi to the NSA of the Bahá'ís of the U. S. and Canada provides a hint. In the message, Effendi wrote that there were “delicate and complex issues” to discuss “with Bahá'í representatives whom I have requested to gather in the Holy Land in the hope of arriving at the best possible solution of the pressing and intricate problems that confront the development of the Bahá'í Cause” (Effendi 1968 [1927a]). Toward this end, Effendi stated that he instructed another Bahá'í, Mr. Mountfort Mills, to “acquaint you with these and other considerations, the delicacy and scope of which only a verbal explanation can adequately reveal. He will fully and authoritatively inform you regarding the policy that should govern the conduct of the *Star of the West*” (Effendi 1968 [1927a]). The details of Mills' communications concerning this policy are unidentified. What is known is that also that year *Star of the West* became one of two magazines associated with the American Bahá'í community. *World Unity* joined the periodical landscape in October 1927.

The formation of *World Unity* traversed many steps, but its roots reached deep into Bahá'í involvement in “various peace, law, and internationalist conventions” (Hodgenson 2021), such as the 1912 Lake Mohonk Conferences (which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá attended) that eventually culminated in the creation of the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Leroy Ioas, a Californian Bahá'í who attended the Lake Mohonk conference, found inspiration in the initiative to spread Bahá'í principles among community leaders, “especially those in positions to put them into effect or to influence the thinking of the citizenry” (Hodgenson 2021). Seeing the success of the first “Race Amity” conference in 1921, Ioas attempted in 1922 to organize such a conference in San Francisco to address not only issues of prejudice toward Black people, but also animosity toward people of Chinese and Japanese descent. However, the San Francisco Bahá'í community decided it was not timely (Hodgenson 2021).

Undeterred, Ioas worked with Rabbi Rudolph Coffee (head of the largest synagogue in San Francisco and the first Jewish chaplain of the California State Senate) to form a “World Unity” committee, bringing aboard Ella Goodall Cooper and Kathryn Frankland, well-known social activists in California who were also Bahá'ís. In March 1925 they successfully hosted the first “World Unity Conference” which featured David Starr Jordan, the founding president of Stanford University, as honorary chairman. After the success of the conference, the committee established the “World Unity Foundation” which would sponsor ongoing conferences as well as oversee the periodical organ known as *World Unity*. The foundation sought cooperation with the NSA of the Bahá'ís of the U. S. and Canada. The NSA approved of the foundation’s proposal but decided it should be an individual Bahá'í initiative rather than an official activity of the Bahá'í Faith. The

NSA did, however, appoint former chairman of the NSA Montfort Mills, to serve as advisor to the World Unity Foundation. In addition, Horace Holley, also a member of the NSA, became managing editor of *World Unity*. Dr. John Herman Randall, an ordained Baptist minister and leader within the Community Church in New York City, was hired as the editor. *World Unity*'s first issue declared it was a "Monthly Magazine for those who seek the world outlook upon present developments of philosophy, science, religion, ethics, and the arts."

While many Bahá'ís were leaders of the foundation, the magazine was not overtly Bahá'í in either scope or leaning. Historian Kathryn Jewett Hodgenson (2021) wrote:

In the beginning, the founders were concerned that associating the World Unity Foundation explicitly with religion would turn away some people who otherwise shared Bahá'í ideals and would cause their primary target audience, leaders of thought, to ignore its activities. In fact, the Bahá'í background of the Foundation was so well-concealed that most who have written about it after it was discontinued have also believed that Dr. Randall was its sole founder and proponent.

The contributing editorial board was also an indomitable (and largely non-Bahá'í) "Who's Who" that included a handful of people active in public discourse and social movements about American race relations, such as Ng Poon Chew (an advocate for Chinese American civil rights), Yamato Ichichashi (a Japanese American intellectual and activist), and the well-known Alain Leroy Locke. But also, appointed alongside these civil and human rights luminaries were those supportive of the American eugenics movement, such as Henry Havelock Ellis, Auguste-Henri Forel, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and David Starr Jordan. The different orientations and interests of the board would soon become reflected in the contradictory theses of the articles on race and racial prejudice.

Toward Structural Understandings of Race and Prejudice

World Unity immediately struck a different tone than did *Star of the West*.

Perhaps reflecting either the editorial influence of either the eugenicist ideologues or that of the stalwart commitment to empiricism and methodology among social scientists, the tone of *World Unity* was immediately less optimistic and perhaps more blunt than *Star of the West* on matters of racial prejudice. Moreover, while still containing editorials and subjective theses, the latter was more descriptive and informational overall, while the former was more scholarly, scientific, and argumentative in tone and timbre alongside the increased appearance of non-Bahá'í authors. For instance, the very first issue of *World Unity* published an article by Ohio State University sociology professor Herbert Adolphus Miller. Not a Bahá'í, but well-known as a scholar of race and ethnicity (associated with the likes of W. I. Thomas and Robert E. Park), Miller's essay laid down the gauntlet of scientific evidence against "race":

If it were possible to show that some racial and national stocks are inherently superior to others the basis for patriotism and the development of armaments for the putting over of the particular race or country might have a justification. There is now practically universal agreement among scientists that all the races and both sexes are inherently equal in capacity. But common sense had not been able to make that discovery even with regard to women. Without science any prejudice may become final. A fundamentalist in religion or politics merely stakes a belief against a belief. But an age-old prejudice may be punctured in a moment by science. Any child can now prove that the earth is not flat, and psychological tests can show the equality of men, women and races. (Miller 1927, 46).

Also, within that same first issue of *World Unity*, Earnest Maurice Best, faculty at the United Theological College in Montreal, Canada, wrote:

As the World War drew to a close, men everywhere began to dream of a new era in which the age-old doctrine of universal brotherhood would at last find practical expression But we were too optimistic. The idealism which had been cultivated so sedulously by the war leaders of

every country was soon abandoned in the clash of selfish interests . . . We have had a recrudescence of racial hatreds. (Best 1927a, 113).

Such articles—written by non-Bahá'ís and with a balance of scientific evidence and religious exegetics—were common in *World Unity*. In particular, many of these come across as an argumentative or supportive response to the dominant racial current of the day. Just three years prior to *World Unity*'s founding, the Immigration Act of 1924 imposed a quota system that favored Northern and Western Europe while it excluded all immigration from Asia. The law restricted immigration to only two percent of the total number of people of each nationality living in the United States as recorded in the 1890 national census (while completely excluding immigrants from Asia). To further complicate the matter, while the 1890 census was the first to use punchcards and an electrical tabulation system, many of the population records were destroyed in a 1921 fire at the U.S. Department of Commerce building in Washington, DC. However, the 1890 census only recorded the place of birth of the person, not nationality. In the place of nationality, the quota used the racial categories employed in the 1890 census (which at the time were limited to eight: “white”, “black”, “Mulatto”, “Quadroon” “Chinese”, “Japanese”, and “Indian” [American Indigenous]) (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). The law, and its appeal to supposedly “objective” counts of people, served to rationalize the White nationalist project. As the historian Mae M. Ngai argued:

In a sense, demographic data were to twentieth-century racists what craniometric data had been to race scientists during the nineteenth century. Like the phrenologists who preceded them, the eugenicists worked backward from classifications they defined *a priori* and declared a causal relationship between the data and race. (Ngai 1999, 77)

Additionally, the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) of Cold Spring Harbor, NY proposed a model eugenic law on which varied states began to model legislation. In

1924, the same year of the passage of the aforementioned Immigration Act, the Commonwealth of Virginia authorized the compulsory sterilization of people deemed “unfit” for the purpose of eugenics. By 1927, the year of *World Unity*’s founding, the U.S. Supreme Court (in *Buck v. Bell*) found that eugenic laws did not violate due process and upheld states’ rights to engage in eugenic sterilization of the “unfit” for the “the protection and health of the state” (Holmes 1927). Such legislation, crafted by the ERO thinktank, would soon serve as the blueprint for the Nazi party’s first compulsory sterilization law in Germany in 1933 (Cohen 2016).

Early on, many used the pages of *World Unity* to oppose racially essentialist and deterministic viewpoints. In moving away from a focus on individual biases and irrational conceptions of race, discourse slowly constructed a focus on larger social structures and scientific advances as the correct way to theologically and scientifically understand race. For instance, appearing in the third issue of *World Unity* in 1927, Ernest Maurice Best authored “The Biological Sanctions of World Unity, Part II” in which he argued that both racial types and racial superiority cannot be distilled to biology or inheritance:

The human race is divided into four or five distinct types, which we distinguish in terms of skin color. A closer analysis indicates fifteen or twenty distinct racial types Of course, none of these classifications is absolute and there is endless overlapping or intergrading, racially, nationally and economically. We hear much talk of “Nordic superiority” and of the duty of maintaining racial integrity. But this specious apologetic for economic exploitation has little or no scientific sanction. It is time we applied the known facts of inheritance to the delusion of “pure racial strains” and to the social obsession of “blue blood”. As a matter of fact the blood of the races has been mixed by migrations and wars times without number, and a “pure Nordic” is a pure mongrel, if not a pure imagination. (Best 1927b: 191).

Rather, Best made the point that prejudice was a function of group dominance and the rationalization of inequality. “Each nation”, he wrote,

... is subdivided into at least three social classes: first, those who work with their hands; second, those who work with their brains; and third, a small but dominating group which works the other two classes. It is this latter, sometimes parasitic, class which reacts most violently against the doctrine of human solidarity. It is this group which labors to keep alive the ancient prejudices and hatreds between race and race (Best 1927b, 191).

Best concluded by arguing that “in the face of such facts” it would be best to [citing the Bible (Micah 6:8)] “reduce our silly prides and prejudices and begin to walk humbly with our neighbors, as well as with our God” (Best 1927b: 192).

Such a focus in *World Order* may have also facilitated a small change in the tone in *Star of the West*. For example, a 1928 article by Alain Leroy Locke’s also abruptly broke with the narrative of prejudice as a matter located solely within the individual. Moreover, he destabilized the opinion—nearly uniform in prior issues of *Bahai Bulletin* and *Star of the West*—that prejudice was rooted in the negative, an attribute absent in one’s individual character such as lack of education, travel, commerce, interaction with others different than oneself, and especially the lack of a sustained relationship with the Divine. After an editor’s note that described Locke as “one of the brilliant leaders of his race and a writer of note” (Locke 1928, 315) Locke began with glowing approval of the November 1927 “Bahá’í Inter-Racial Conference.” For Locke, the conference was marked by a stark deviation from platitudes and abstractions: “A mere assertion of human unity will never unite us; the root causes of disunion and antagonism have to be faced and considered and some counter-motives and compensatory interests discovered and brought forward. This almost surgical task was bravely and successfully achieved” (Locke 1928, 315). Locke then preceded to take liberal license in advocating for and emphasizing

select points of the conference speakers. Favoring the remarks of the president of Howard University (Mordecai W. Johnson), Locke wrote:

If prejudice were merely rooted in open hatred and conscious antagonism, it would be an easier thing to accuse and cure. The great difficulty is that it so often represents the good impulse gone wrong, the loyalty of devotion curdled into the fanaticism of bigotry. The difficulty then is that we have not yet learned to entertain our loyalty to our ideals as we see them on the plane of moral reciprocity for loyalties different from our own; and that then, with these moral motives ready to justify factionalism and partisanship, powerful practical motives-economic and political have always come forward to make the course of intolerance, exploitation, and oppression profitable and appealing. (Locke 1928, 316)

Prejudice was not simply the absence of a quality, but was rather morality twisted. For Locke, good intentions or character traits were insufficient to eradicate racial prejudice. Prejudice was virtue gone awry.

Even more importantly, Locke argued a significant two-fold point about race prejudice and religion more explicitly than any found in the preceding pages of American Bahá'í periodicals. First, while earlier articles certainly stated that a spiritual transformation of all people was necessary to remediate racial prejudice, the unit of analysis was the individual. Prejudice was solely the responsibility of each person; it existed within the human mind as an internal blight. Instead, Locke emphasized that prejudice resided not just in individuals, but also within the dominant institutions and ideologies of society. While not yet evoking the language of “structure” à la “structural” or “institutional” forms of racism, Locke’s stance emphasized that social institutions would have to either mutate or be eradicated, as they were the repositories of prejudice rather than that of the individual. Locke thus wrote of the “the dilemma of present-day society” in which:

the ordinary organized agencies of Western civilization can no longer be depended upon to take a consistent moral stand on the vital issues of race

relationships. In America particularly the dominant forces of society were reactionary and conservative on the principles of this issue to the point of cowardice. (Locke 1928, 316)

Locke's second point dovetailed with the first. Locke hinted that any religious single relationship, membership, or sect was insufficient for combating racial prejudice. It was not enough to simply have a belief in a monotheistic God that would then, through that faith, somehow spiritually purge one's soul of prejudice. To make the point, Locke took aim at the Christian church: "the spectacle of the segregated Christian church conforming to the biased public feelings of prejudice against the very grain of its own teachings and doctrine" (Locke 1928, 316). The solution to racial prejudice, in the context of these pages, was the teaching of the Bahá'í Faith and recognition of Bahá'u'lláh as applied to not just the individual, but society *writ large*. Locke emphasized the point in his approval of the conference, writing that it was "the most successful of any yet held, above all in that its discussion of the issues, without losing any of that universality of treatment which is a cardinal principle with the Baha'i approach, came to more practical grips with the problems of race relationships than ever before" (Locke 1928, 315). Such "practical grips" had to include, for Locke, the application of Bahá'í teachings to either transforming or building new institutions and modes of thought. Without such labor, the fight against racial prejudice rested, insufficiently, on bold and plucky individuals:

Therefore until there was some general regeneration of the public conscience, we were dependent for progress upon enlightened and spiritually courageous individuals willing to act radically in loyalty to their own convictions of human brotherhood and equality. The conquest of prejudice was thus the crusade for a spiritual radicalism which would place moral consistency above social conformity And, far as we are from the development of any such spiritual democracy, the only practical hope for either the oppressed minorities or the oppressing majorities lies in its speediest possible spread and adoption. (Locke 1928, 316).

Locke, now even more well-known in the wake of his 1925 publication of *The New Negro*, had become the face of the Harlem Renaissance, which was quickly bringing the modes of inquiry in both the arts and sciences to bear on the questions of racial prejudice. Accordingly, *World Unity* regularly featured book reviews, many pertaining to race and racial prejudice. For instance, in John Herman Randall, Jr.'s section "Rising Tide", subtitled "Notes on current books possessing special significance in the light of the trend toward world unity" (Randall, Jr. 1928, 65), Randall summarized the author of *Portraits in Color*, Mary White Ovington, as:

a devoted worker in behalf of the negro race, gives twenty sketches of outstanding American negroes. Such a record of individual achievement and of disinterested devotion to their own people can hardly fail, together with volumes like Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, to dispel the fog of prejudice with clear facts. (Randall, Jr. 1928, 66)

The zeitgeist in which these appeared, not yet deflated by the impending 1929 economic crash, was buoyed by new forms of intellectual and artistic endeavors. Recently imported from the likes of Germany and France, the ascendant field of sociology found some resonance among those wishing to understand prejudice as more than an individual, but a group or collective, phenomenon. Discourse in American Bahá'í periodicals reflected that shift. Consider Abba Hillel Silver's 1928 *World Unity* article, "The One and the Many" which read:

One of the major problems of philosophy throughout its history has been the problem of the one and the many This problem of philosophy has been carried over into the field of sociology how to insure the fullest expression of the individual's capacity without destroying society; how to save man from group tyranny whilst preserving the heritage and the continuity of the group. This same problem obtrudes itself into the realm of racial and national relationships. (Silver 1928, 81)

After five pages of sweeping historical and sociological treatment of individualism and collectivism, Silver concluded that modern prejudice was caused by

imperialism: “Pseudo-scientific propaganda for racial imperialism has been widely disseminated in the world during the last decade . . . The people in the South used it as an excuse for denying the colored man his elementary human rights and his legitimate opportunities” (Silver 1928, 86). Silver then proceeded to link such the ideologies of racial prejudice to social structural phenomena, specifically law:

As long as the pseudo-scientific notions of race superiority endure in the world—and they are very powerful today, so powerful that they have been written into the immigration laws of our land—so long will races not meet, and world unity will still remain the fond dream of prophets and seers. (Silver 1928, 87).

Silver then echoed, nearly verbatim, Locke’s aforementioned remarks in a 1928 issue of *Star of the West* regarding both the hypocrisy of the Christian church and the naivety of placing faith in social change in abstract idealism:

Our churches functioned as the lackeys of the State . . . if organized religion is to reclaim its place of leadership in the conduct of human affairs it must lead a crusade for the fulfillment of its historic mission—peace . . . World unity is not an ideal which can be achieved merely by wishing. It can be achieved only through tireless labor and endless persistence by all lovers of goodness, truth and beauty. (Silver 1928, 88).

Whether the more confrontational stance in *World Unity* had an effect on *Star of the West* or both were responding to the same stimuli, the differences between the two periodicals slowly began to narrow. For example, a 1928 article in *Star of the West*, entitled “Phyllis Wheatley—An African Genius,” confronted many of the assumptions about the supposedly inherent inferiority of Black people. Authored by no less than Mary Church Terrell (not a Bahá’í, but a friend of Louis Gregory due in part in their mutual work and leadership in the Bethel Literary and Historical Society in Washington, D.C.), the article begins with a nod to the United States’ first president: “When you call George Washington ‘First in peace’, please remember that a young slave girl was the first

person in the world, publicly, to refer to him in that way. It was Phyllis Wheatley, a young African poetess, who wrote a poem in his honor..." (Terrell 1928, 221). Terrell's reference to Washington may have been motivated by the words of another "Founding Father", Thomas Jefferson. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson infamously took account of Wheatley's poetry rather derisively: "Religion indeed has produced a Phyllis Whately [sic]; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism. The heroes of the Dunciad are to her, as Hercules to the author of that poem" (Jefferson 1787 [1785], 234). Terrell's article could be read as a sort of response, as Terrell made sure to indicate that Washington had "addressed her as 'Miss Phyllis' and declared she exhibited striking proof of poetical talent" (Terrell 1928, 222) before concluding that "If any other human being, black, white, yellow, red or brown, has ever made such marvelous intellectual progress and achieved such great literary success in such short time under similar circumstances as Phyllis Wheatley, the records of history do not show it" (Terrell 1928, 223).

In another poignant example, *Star of the West* published in 1929 a two-part essay entitled "The Races of Men—Many or One?" by Louis Gregory. In the "Editorial Comment", Gregory first analyzed the scientific discourse on race and then turned toward the "religious and spiritual phases of the subject" (*Star of the West* 1929, 7). After Gregory (1929a, 367) cited Charles Darwin's conclusion that race is an "illusory and imaginary nature," he wrote:

The divisions of mankind upon the basis of physical features are due to fancy rather than reality. Attempts to describe with any degree of accuracy those designate by such terms as Aryan, Mongolian, Indian, African, Malay, Nordic, Hebrew, Negro, invariably result in cross divisions, because all these groups overlap, and even when we select the most divergent types, as human beings they show vastly more points in

common than signs of difference. The term race as applied to all mankind has a scientific and logical basis, but not so in its limited sense. (1929a, 367)

While the articles in *Star of the West* and *World Unity* reflected a rather overt agenda of questioning racial types as coherent categories and undermining claims to racial prejudice as a natural instinct,. These periodicals were not immune to the arguments and logic of scientific racism. Due in part to the rising influence of social science and eugenics on the public consciousness about race, coupled with the rising anxieties about racial equality, ethnic immigration, the distribution of resources, and the role of public policy that would all soon become exacerbated in the context of the Great Depression, there was little these periodicals could do to completely inoculate themselves from scientific racism. As a result, by 1929, rather heterogenous, if not disjointed and contradictory, definitions of race and racial prejudice stalked their pages, especially in *World Unity*.

Race “Traits” and “Tendencies”

Outside of Bahá’í discourse, the academic and layperson quest to define race had found a home in the appeal to race “traits” or “tendencies”—terms of the day that were commonly used to provide a thinly-veiled rationale for racial inequality and discrimination. This is not an ahistorical critique. Many social scientists, from W. E. B. Du Bois’s 1897 essay in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* to Kelly Miller’s 1897 article in *The American Negro Academy* (which were published over three decades prior), condemned the concepts for both their lack of supporting evidence and their use in politically-motivated attempts to legalize both racial segregation and inequality. Nonetheless, the terms occasionally appeared uncritically in popular Bahá’í discourse, often composed by lettered men and women.

But why? Possible answers are many. The editors, under the guiding Bahá'í principle of the fundamental unity and agreement of science and religion, may have grasped for most convenient social scientific research on race, most of which was reactionary at best and overtly racist at worst. More accurate and progressive scholarship, like that of Du Bois and Miller's would not have been as known or readily available, given their marginalization and dismissal by many White social scientists (cf. Hughey and Goss 2018; Ladner 1973; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). Also, the dominant research on race may have been interpreted not as indictments of particular races or as commentary on the supposed intractability of racial inequality in either nature or society, but as evidence of human diversity that would one day come into unification and harmony. By emphasizing racial differences the editors could have meant to accentuate not rationales for inequality or discrimination, but instead the varied distinctions and heterogeneity of humanity which alone and segregated evidence weaknesses, but that together and integrated could form a stronger social body. Lastly, many could have simply and implicitly accepted the White normative thesis that certain non-White races were inferior, if not biologically, but culturally, intellectually, and morally in comparison to the superiority of the majority of White people in the U.S. and Western Europe.

Whatever the case, the pages of *World Unity* became increasingly filled with discussions of racial "traits" and "tendencies". For instance, in a 1929 issue of *World Unity*, Frank Hankins, a sociology professor at Smith College, opined in "Racial Relationships and International Harmony" that different races possessed obvious differences by way of height, hair color, head size, and even "mental capacity":

A race is therefore distinguished not by a single trait but by a combination of traits which are inherited as a racial complex. The term race is thus zoological. It designates a group of persons distinguishable from other persons by an inherited set of traits. With respect to each trait its members vary, but the race is distinguished by the way in which several traits combine in a heritable complex. Nordics are, on an average, tall, long-headed and blond; Mediterraneans are, on an average, short, long-headed and brunet; Alpines are, on an average, medium in stature and complexion, but round-headed One should not draw the conclusion that racial composition has nothing to do with national unity and strength. Races differ one from another in physical strength and hardihood, in mental capacity and in temperament. (Hankins 1929, 313, 319)

Similarly, some writers began to casually essentialize racial traits as immutable characteristics of varied racial types, which influenced how each groups behaved and how one group should interact with the other. These appeared in varied forms and were marshalled toward diverse interests. For example, in writing in *World Unity* of how racism had normalized deep suspicions, mistrust, and deception between “White” and “Black” people, Clifford Miller (an African American and writer for the oldest Black newspaper in New York City, *Amsterdam News*) penned that “The Negro has been trained by slavery to suppress his real self in the presence of white folk” before continuing: “Negroes know unerringly the insincere of their own group The Negro race is a cockpit of internecine feuds, which every wise white man will avoid. To allow one's self to be the cat's paw to blast another Negro is a fatal blunder” (Miller 1929, 302). While Miller’s essay was meant as a cautionary tale and vista on the common Black mistrust of Whites in the fight for racial equality, a few articles were more diabolical and advocated against racial equality. For instance, the sociologist Charlotte Perkins Gilman published “Unity is not Equality” in *World Unity*. A leading “eugenic feminist” of her day, Gilman had prior authored many racist tracts in which she argued that the reproduction of non-White races was a detriment to society, or that Black people should

be re-enslaved, such as her 1908 essay “A Suggestion on the Negro Problem” in the *American Journal of Sociology* in which she labeled Black people “a large body of aliens” who were “widely dissimilar and in many respects inferior” to White people and recommended that many African Americans be “enlisted” into a “compulsory” Southern labor force to focus on “modern agriculture” (Gilman 1908). Gilman’s article in the September 1929 issue of *World Unity*, published just one month prior to the “Black Thursday” genesis of the Great Depression, drew from that same racist reservoir from which she explicitly opposed racial equality:

The hope for an orderly organized world is by no means advanced by claims of racial equality. A physical organism is composed of many interdependent parts, some more vital than others, some immensely superior to others. Eyes, for instance, are more valuable than toenails, whose use as claws has long since disappeared among civilized peoples. Blood is essential to life, but one could spare a pint of it much more safely than a cupful of grey matter from the brain. Unity and mutual service, carries no implication of equality. We shall get on much faster toward a federation of nations when we stop insisting that one race is precisely as useful to itself or to the world as any other. (Gilman 1929, 418)

Other articles were less forceful than Gilman’s, but still advocated racial essentialism. John Herman Randall’s 1930 *World Unity* essay “A World Community” described contemporary thinking on race as having benefited from the knowledge of racial “differences” and “traits”:

But even more significant than the likenesses that exist between the various peoples is the knowledge that we have gained of their differences. The various races and race cultures that have developed through long centuries, in different environments and in parts of the world widely separated from one another, have inevitably tended to stress certain ideas and ideals in the life of one people, while others are stressed to a different degree elsewhere; it is also true that different environments through long periods of time call out different traits of character; so that we recognize what we call racial traits and national traits, just as we do individual traits . . . Therefore every race and people has some unique and distinct contribution to make to the general cultural life of man. (Randall 1930, 244)

Randall, a Columbia University philosopher, may have drawn upon his familiarity with Aristotelian ideas on human difference to guide his approach to race. Just pages prior he wrote, “Aristotle’s treatises on astronomy, physics and chemistry have long since become obsolete, while his politics and ethics still represent the highwater mark of human thought” (Randall 1930, 232). Such a “mark” was made in Aristotle’s *Politics* (composed circa 300s B.C.E.) in which Aristotle’s “Great Chain of Being” reflected a taxonomy based on the traits of different people which in turn justified their status in civic life (cf. Lovejoy 1971 [1936]). For example, according to Aristotle, “Asiatics” were natural slaves because they were “deficient in courage” (Aristotle 2017 [ca. 300 BCE], 162). Thus, the notion that “some should govern, and others be governed, is not only necessary but useful, and from the hour of their birth some are marked out for those purposes.” (Aristotle 2017 [ca. 300 BCE], 11). As with many other authors in American Bahá’í periodicals, Randall attempted to craft an argument about the diversity of the world and its inevitable unification. By way of emphasizing the heterogeneity of the world, racial differences were accentuated; the concept of race traits thus served as a convenient demarcation of racial groups that would eventually synthesize and make of humanity a better, *sui generis* people.

Such arguments were at times rather mottled. Consider a 1931 article in *Star of the West* entitled “Civilization, Race and Intelligence” by Stanwood Cobb. Cobb, a Bahá’í and graduate of Harvard Divinity School, wrote that “an assumption of inherent racial superiority based on biological factors, is unjustifiable in the light of historic and scientific fact” (1931, 338). Yet, in qualifying the stance that racial groups possess no inherent inequality based on biology, he then wrote that races are distinct biological

groups: Regardless of “internal or external forces of disruption,” Cobb explained, “the race continues in the same biological strain” (1931, 339). Cobb appears to treat races as distinct biological types, which do not however have immutable traits or attributes as many advocates of scientific racism trumpeted ever-loudly by the late 1930s. But just how race exists as a “biological strain,” yet possesses no attributes related to that strain, is never explained. To escape this conundrum, Cobb concludes the essay with a color-blind, hyper-individualist stance: “the time has come when we should judge men as individuals, regardless of race. We must give up the habit of pigeon-holing the different races, assigning fixed racial attributes to them.” The confusion within the article was emblematic of much of the combined Bahá’í discourse on race in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Few could agree on what exactly “race” was in relation to any sort of “traits”, “strains” or other measurable criteria and thus contradictory appraisals were common.

Racism, Reorganization, and Education

The lack of clarity on the concept of race, the rise of race-based Fascism in Germany, and the turmoil of the Great Depression, opened wide the door to explore racialist solution to problems of economic inequality, nationality, and citizenship. Discursive re-configurations of racial histories and possible futures abounded, whether in the advocacy of global racial segregation or in the interpretation of slavery as a form of racial harmony and happiness. In regard to the former, in August 1933, Carl A. Ross published a racial nationalist and separatist rendering of ethnoracial migration in *World Unity* in an article entitled “World Citizenship”:

Some readers may concede these advantages to a World Union, but I think it is going too far to have it embrace the whole world. They may say that consolidation should follow geographic and racial lines to be successful;

that while Europe might well form such a Union, the Americas another and likely Asia a third, it would be unwise to attempt to combine all race and continents in one government. One answer is that such a group or race consolidation would, in practice, intensify the conflicting characteristics of each group (Ross 1933, 201)

Instead of advocating for multiracial nations or ethno-racial migration, Ross argued that each nation should remain predominantly racially homogenous. “World unity” would be accomplished economically; a larger world government only charged with coordinating market transactions through “the gold standard, or any other stand in finance and banking” in order to “meet the needs of our world wide business” (Ross 1933, 201).

Employing a comparison of the U.S. system of Federalism to such a global vision of distinct racial nations trading with one another, Ross advanced an explicit racial question:

American groups under consideration in 1789 were a New England group, a Central, and a Southern group, with doubt as to whether New York would join the Central or the new England group Today the place of New York might well be taken by some nation in the Near East do we desire the formation of any white group and a yellow group under any consideration? what possible use could there be in the struggle needed to reform the world into a number of larger, competing racial group associations? (Ross 1933, 203).

His answer was that through a global Federalist system of racial nationalist economic trade and competition, the world would thus remedy “the economic problems from which our depression resulted” (Ross 1933, 203).

In regard to the latter, E. B. M. Dewing’s published “Race Prejudice—A Barrier to the Soul” in the May 1934 issue of *Star of the West*. Beginning with the statement that racial prejudice is “unjust, unscientific, unethical, and produces a boomerang effect inasmuch as prejudiced people are dangerously conservative and their material as well as their spiritual condition is liable to suffer”, Dewing then remarked that “The root cause of prejudice from the psychological angle is fear of the unknown” (Dewing 1934, 42). Yet,

Dewing then identified the underlying cause of that “fear” as a destabilized commercial and social system in which the “defining line” between racial groups is lost:

However, as long as the status of the two peoples is clearly defined there is no prejudice. It is like a master and his dog. The master may be kind or cruel according to his nature, but he will not be prejudiced. It is for this reason that slaves often lived happy and harmonious lives in the service of their owners. When, later, the slave became free and the defining line obscured, fear of loss of status crept in and prejudice grew apace. (Dewing 1934, 42)

With the theory that destabilized racial hierarchies cause racialized fears which in turn cause racial prejudice, Dewing was able to claim, without either irony or explanation, that slaves lived “happy and harmonious lives”. Later, in an apparent qualification rife with paternalism, Dewing wrote that it “does not make it right or just for a dominant race, however, to justify its attitude of exclusive privilege simply because a backward people who know no better tacitly acquiesce to the conditions” (Dewing 1934, 42). Pages later, after citing varied Bahá’í Scripture and social scientific evidence about the nature of racial prejudice, Dewing then jettisoned his prior evocation of the causal power of social structure and concluded with an appeal to individual agency in a bizarre tautology:

In conclusion, let it be pointed out that the more the numbers of people who have cast off their old prejudices increase, the easier it will become to live unprejudiced lives, and the more we strive individually to widen this enlightened circle of unprejudiced people, the more rapidly will the circle expand. The Bahá’í Cause is slowly but surely erecting a social sanctuary wherein people of all races can dwell in harmony without fear of social or economic disaster. Some day this sanctuary will be society itself. (Dewing 1934, 46).

Whether or not such a social sanctuary would include relationships akin to “master and his dog” was left unstated, but Dewing’s utopian and millennialist rendering presents a unreconciled relationship between happiness, harmony, and equality. In this take, racial

inequality could be deeply ingrained and even function to stave off “social or economic disaster.”

Racism continued to find expression in *Star of the West*. For instance, Edwin L. Mattern’s 1934 article “The Racial Myth” stated, “According to Professor Radin, races have always been mixed, the white more than any other. While the Negro is overwhelmingly long-headed and the Mongolian equally rounded-headed, the Caucasian is both” (Mattern 1934, 83). While attempting to undermine theories of race based on biological purity [“what definition can without injustice separate the inferior races from the superior? . . . Color is no criterion” (1934, 85)], Mattern nonetheless advanced a host of White supremacist assumptions laced with back-handed compliments just lines later: “The Mongolian for ages led the world, and Japan, leaving its chrysalis state less than a century ago, advanced to a front-position by adaptation and imitation of western accomplishments. Surely one cannot brand the Japanese as inferior because of his color or the shape of his eye-lid” (1934, 85). While articles of this ilk were sporadic, their inclusion gestures toward the existence of a troubling logic—in so long as “unity” and “oneness” were hailed as the ultimate goals, then the inequalities across varied racial groups could be grounded in rather disturbing concepts. Such discourse illumines a rather sloppy and amateurish approach to race at best, if not a deeply problematic hypocrisy at worst.

Perhaps due to these racist diatribes, as well as a lack of clarity as to the mission of these Bahá’í periodicals, and the tightening of purse-strings during the Depression, a reorganization was underway. In 1932, the World Unity Foundation explicitly promoted the Bahá’í concept of world federation and adopted the tenets set forth in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s

1919 letter to the Central Organisation for Durable Peace in The Hague (Hodgenson 2021). Moreover, that same year, Horace Holley (then managing editor of *World Unity*) wrote to Shoghi Effendi to ask for guidance as to the future direction of *World Unity* and if it could be merged with *Star of the West*. In response, in a letter written on behalf of Effendi to the US NSA, which stated in part:

The Guardian welcomes such a proposition with deep gratification for it means that the energy that has been until now dissipated along channels not strictly Bahá'í, will now be used solely for the progress of the Faith, and the promotion of its principles in their entirety There are, however, certain questions that Shoghi Effendi would urge the National Assembly to take into consideration before deciding on this important issue. First and foremost is the fact that the Magazine which is to result from such a union should become the organ of the Cause and under the full jurisdiction of the National Assembly. Non-Bahá'ís can cooperate but the responsibility for its policy should be in the N. S. A. In other words, the *World Unity* should become fully Bahá'í. (*Bahá'í News* 1933, 6)

With the plans in motion, at the end of 1932 Randall resigned as editor-in-chief of *World Unity* to be replaced by Horace Holley for the February 1933 issue. Despite the fact that in the last years of its publication, “it was openly a Bahá'í journal” (Hodgenson 2021), it would not be until 1934 that *World Unity* came under the aegis of the NSA.

Nonetheless, the tack of *World Unity* began to gradually change course.

However, none of the explicitly Bahá'í authored and overtly Bahá'í oriented articles addressed racial prejudice. Under Bahá'í editorial control, the synthesis of unambiguous Bahá'í perspectives with commentary about racial prejudice was perhaps akin to a third rail, which may have reflected the direction given by Shoghi Effendi. “Shoghi Effendi’s interim policy” as Christopher Buck (2012, 557) pointed out, “was to pragmatically avoid sparking harmful controversy His approach was gradualist and quietist . . . yet without compromise to the bedrock Baha’i principle of “race amity.” Hence, the few articles that did address race over 1933-1935 foregrounded the power of and education,

whereby materialism or animal instincts of human beings were blamed for racial animosities which education could either resolve or counter. For example, a 1934 issue of *World Unity* printed the transcript of a 1933 radio address given by Hans Kohn. Kohn was a lecturer on political science at the Workmen's Seminary in Jerusalem as well as on the faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York City. A scholar of Muslim and "Oriental" culture, Kohn authored several historical studies on nationalism. Kohn began by stating, "The recent legislation by the German government directed against all members of the non-Aryan race has drawn the attention of the public to the importance of the race question as one of the determining factors in world politics" (Kohn 1934, 205). Continuing, Kohn opined as to the crude and visceral roots of racial prejudice: "Nothing appeals so much to the most primitive instincts of man as an appeal to his race, for the race is the strongest expression of the group instinct" (Kohn 1934, 205). Kohn was not a Bahá'í and did not appeal to spirituality as the solution to prejudice, but he remarked that humanity's primitive drive toward prejudice is generally evoked when repressed racial groups seek equality with the racially dominating group: "Race conflicts do not become acute until the race kept in the inferior position is animated by the tendency to change its status and to strive for equality with the race deemed superior" (Kohn 1934, 207). Concluding, Kohn argued that education was the sole remedy: "Liberalism believes that man can be changed and improved by education and by social influences" (1934, 208).

If not in response to Kohn directly, John Clifton Moffitt's 1934 article "The Psychology of Race Prejudice" countered the thesis that racial prejudice was rooted in instinct:

Many students have attempted to justify race prejudice on the theory that it is instinctive. One of the common criteria of an instinct is that the form of behavior is universal among the species. Quite true race prejudice seemingly exists among all national groups, but that alone does not prove it is instinctive . . . Numerous illustrations have been given (by those who find the answer in the seemingly magic word “instinct”) of young children who show signs of fear when confronted by a member of a different so-called race . . . We have overlooked the significant fact that young children are acquiring prejudices very early in life largely due to the behavior of their parents and other associates. Surely, there is no justification for the child to learn a race prejudice differently than he would learn to accept any one political party in preference to any other. (Moffitt 1934, 90-91)

Moffitt was a dedicated teacher deeply-concerned with childhood development. And as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, believed in the ability of human beings to transcend a fallen or carnal state to achieve divine living, especially through the accumulation of knowledge. In line with both his occupation and faith, he authored many books on education, including one that relied on social scientific research entitled *An Investigation of the Out of School Children Between Six and Eighteen Years of Age in Provo, Utah* (1929) and later *A Century of Service, 1860-1960: A History of the Utah Education Association* (1961), which was deemed “a gold mine of information . . . motivation and even inspiration for the teaching profession” by the *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Himes 1963, 72). After laying out a laundry list of the causes of prejudice within children [“Social custom, caste, economic status, war with its propaganda, rise and fall of governments, and national groups” (Moffitt 1934, 91)], and more including tables and charts and recapitulations of sociological and psychological studies, Moffitt concluded:

While there is some evidence that race prejudice is deep-seated, there is also reason to believe that much can be done through such agencies as the schools to displace the existing prejudice with a correct understanding and an attitude of admiration for other national groups. (Moffitt 1934, 95)

Elsa P. Kimball of Smith College, in her 1934 essay “Sociology and World Unity” similarly found that prejudice would have to be combatted by a new global consciousness or a “reconditioning’ of our emotions and loyalties [sic] to groups and ideals beyond the grounds of nationalism to a world patriotism; world ethnocentrism, if you please” (Kimball 1934, 147). Kimball believed recent centuries’ “racial contacts and consequently cultural accumulation has been greater than during any other given length of time” (Kimball 1934, 138-139). She read such data through the lens of sociologist Lester F. Ward’s notion of “collective telesis” (1921 [1898]): humanity would discover the social variables that constrain and enable human activity, and by adjusting those and educating all as to those variables, socially advance and “take control of our destiny” as Kimball put it (1934, 139). Thus, Kimball triumphantly concluded that “a creation of new world mores concomitantly with the interdiffusion of world cultures” was occurring which would in turn “produce ‘consciousness of kind’ and hence mutual aid.” But, she added, emphasizing Ward’s prophetic sociological concept, “‘consciousness of kind’ will not be enough if it be not augmented by the universalized knowledge of the principles of man’s intellectual and emotional entity, if man does not take up the task of conscious self-direction, in a word—social Telesis” (Kimball 1934, 147).

While Kohn, Moffitt, and Kimball all failed to mention faith or religion as keys to remedying prejudice, they aligned with a Bahá’í perspective on racial prejudice as learned behavior which could thus be tamed or controlled with training and re-education. Yet, these were not the only attacks on the ascendant pseudo-scientific racism of the day. Others directly confronted the contradictions and unsupported claims of race science with entirely secular argument, while others combined their attacks on unsound scientific

claims to racial inequality with moral appeals to racial equality that were often peppered with religious references. For example, writing in *World Unity*, Hamilton Fyfe, a well-known British journalist and former editor of the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Herald*, directly attacked racist pseudo-science:

The influence of climate on racial type and character is not allowed for sufficiently. Why are Americans distinct from the national stock out of which they came? Why do Australians differ so widely in appearance, in temperament, in speech, from natives of Britain? How is it that a Dutch family transported to Africa produces a type so dissimilar to anything in Holland as General Smuts? (Fyfe 1934, 78)

In another poignant example, and beginning his article with an homage, J. C. McMorries of Lincoln University wrote, “We are indebted to Dr. W. E. B. DuBois for the following definition of the central problem that commands our attention: ‘The problem of the color line, particularly in America is well known. It is the question of the treatment and the place in society and in the State, of the descendants of African slaves who were freed by the Civil War’” (McMorries 1934, 69). Despite being entitled “Christianity and Race Relations, Pt I”, McMorries’ article contained a great deal of scientific rebuttals to racist thinking which he increasingly merged with Biblical proof-texting. With numerous footnotes on every page, McMorries systematically addressed the logical inconsistencies and missteps of racist pseudo-science. For example, in taking to task Thomas Russell Garth’s 1931 book *Race Psychology*, McMorries argued (citing Garth):

A few words of criticism may be offered just here, for the popular view with reference to the races of men has been challenged. It is held that. “Belief in inequality is a ‘science of white people’ who have set it going and seek to so maintain it. Since to begin with, they regard themselves as better than others they take such white trait as they deem desirable and vaunt them as superior traits” [quotation from Garth]. But the notion of racial inequality must either stand or fall with the scientific evidence as it is produced We may say finally along with Haddon that “a racial type is after all an artificial concept,” (McMorries 1934, 71-72)

McMorries then concluded his article with an pragmatic appeal to synthesize religious and material logic as a soteriological enterprise of world scale:

Recognizing the fact that the problems of race relations are largely economic of base, and that the whole trend in industrialization is mechanistic and de-humanizing, Christian people must set up competitive agencies that humanize. In conclusion, it is necessary only to say that, “The practice of the Christian principle of brotherhood on a world scale-- that is the human family's only hope.” (McMorries 1934, 77)

While not a Bahá'í, McMorries' approach—a creative amalgamation of spirituality and science—presaged the dominant strategy used in the next era of Bahá'í periodical discourse on race.

Summation

By 1934, the World Unity Foundation consulted with Bahá'í institutions and had concluded to merge *World Unity* with *Star of the West* to become a new periodical under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly of the U. S. and Canada—*World Order* (*Bahá'í News* 1935, 8). The March 1935 issue somberly stated:

This issue of *World Unity* concludes Volume XV and fulfills a definite cycle in the evolution of its effort to create a new type of literature on world affairs. The unique character of the magazine has proceeded directly from the outlook of its founders, which realized the inter-dependence of religion, science and sociology in the movements simultaneously destroying the past and forming a new era in human history. (*World Unity* 1935: 383)

This statement reflects the multifaceted and sometimes conflicting aims of varied groups, ideas, and interests. This perhaps explain why, from 1927 to 1935, both *Star of the West* and *World Unity* advanced rather strongly-opinionated theses concerning race and racial prejudice. While definitions for race proved slippery, and varied strategies on how best to address prejudice were offered, a dominant early trend in both periodicals was the

centrality of racial essentialism and determinism, or the notion that “race” existed as a biological set of traits which then could direct mental and behavioral activity. Both social science and eugenics were rising in social significance, and the era was one of deep concern for the intersection of race in social, economic, and political life. People searched for definitive answers to complex questions. Seen in this light, it would be difficult for any periodical not to construct a contradictory understanding of race and prejudice—some issues of *Star of the West* and *World Order* simultaneously contained articles advocating attacks upon, and defenses of, race as a significant biological category. And several articles were outright racist apologetics, whether of slavery, racial nationalism and segregation, or racial inequality. Despite such tangled discourse, the articles that launched assaults on race-as-biology often merged Bahá’í theological imperatives regarding the “oneness of humanity” with then-current scientific findings and authority, as well as anointed education as a remedy to racist thinking and practice.

Chapter VIII.

Science, Culture, and Religion in *World Order* (1935-1949)

In the context of ascending Nazism in Europe and racist pseudo-science and eugenics in the U.S., and emerging as the sole American Bahá'í periodical and under the explicit editorial control of the NSA, *World Order* began with a decidedly anti-racist bent. Given the social and political changes of the late 1930s and the decade of the 1940s, varied constructions of race and racial prejudice surfaced: from an emphasis on economics and nationalism alongside a use of “culture” as a synonym for race, to seeing and bifurcated emphases on either science or religion as supplying answers to problems of racial inequality and hatred.

Science and Spirituality toward Economics and Nationalism

In the very first issue of *World Order*, Paul Russell Anderson’s article “Religion, Race and Unity” took on the causes of prejudice, arguing forcefully that American Bahá'ís must focus “on the problems of group relations in America” (Anderson 1935, 36). Citing Everett R. Clinchy’s book *All in the Name of God* as a “backfire against prejudice”, Anderson wrote approvingly of the text, which:

spends considerable time on such organizations as the Know Nothing movement, the American Protective Association, and the Ku Klux Klan and tries to show how they developed in periods of instability and turmoil. He writes vigorously and poignantly and the chapters naturally flow from the pen of a man who has seen bitterness, hate and discrimination gnaw at the vitals of American unity and cosmopolitanism. (Anderson 1935, 36-37)

The combination of both historical reference to White terrorism and the subjective response to American hypocrisy, not simply as a rhetorical flourish, was used as segue into the kind of complex and detailed discussion of the mechanisms of racial prejudice that had not been frequent in prior Bahá'í periodicals. This fiery tone extended throughout Anderson's delineation of the root issues motivating racial prejudice: "economic, social and cultural rivalry" (Anderson 1935, 39). For Anderson, the solution to solving racial prejudice, particularly "white-Negro relations," would be clarified by "inclusive sociological investigation of widely diverse elements which lead to race hatred" (Anderson 1935, 39). The moralized religious opposition to racial prejudice would be bolstered by, and grounded in, appeal to scientific rationality and empiricism promised by the social sciences.

The second issue of *World Order* contained an article with a similar unflinching tone to that of Anderson's. With a similar appeal to axiological and epistemological concerns, C. F. Andrews' "Race Prejudice" did not shy from how struggle and competition, often seen in economic trade, was a source of racial prejudice. And rather than adopting a stance that one could individually educate-away prejudice as many of the prior articles in *Star of the West* or *World Unity* did, Andrews turned toward social and economic redress as the solution. With a hint of Marxist influence, Andrews claimed that racial prejudices would decline with attention to class inequality: "Where for any reason, economic conflict, or social conflict becomes diminished and reduced, it is not unlikely that race prejudice, which had become involved in these things will become diminished and reduced also" (Andrews 1935, 60). Yet, Andrews did not advocate a historical materialist approach, he did not cavalierly replace education with other external social

structures, and he did not simply anoint religion as a cure-all. Rather, he admitted that racial prejudice could retain its power even after social and economic inequalities are lessened and that religion could even exacerbate prejudice:

race prejudice will survive, even when economic and social barriers are broken down. Whenever religion enters in and accompanies racial prejudice the evil that ensues becomes worst of all. There is no prejudice stronger than that in which difference of race, color, economic and social status are combined with difference of religion. (Andrews 1935, 60)

As a solution, Andrews made appeal to both individual and organizational factors, concluding with a holistic social scientific approach that if “both psychology and social structure are modified together the removal of race prejudice may come about rapidly without any reaction” (Andrews 1935, 60).

So began the first few issues of *World Order*. Balancing scientific and religious appeals with attention to both micro and macro variables, several articles named heinous acts of terrorism and their perpetrators, whether bad faith actors, specific organizations, or particular laws and public policies. In its application of recent social scientific research on prejudice, many refrained from overly optimistic or prophetic takes that racial prejudice would simply decline as Bahá'ís labored to build the “Most Great Peace” [(a millennialist term from Bahá'í Scripture that predicts a future era in which “the earth will be transformed, and the world of humanity arrayed in tranquility and beauty. Disputes, quarrels, and murders will be replaced by peace, truth, and concord; among the nations, peoples, races, and countries, love and amity will appear” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1990, 74-75)]. And still, *World Order* was an explicitly Bahá'í journal that deviated greatly from the racist character of articles on racial prejudice found in the final years of *World Unity*. Perhaps the co-editorship of Stanwood Cobb and Horace Holley was the cause. They would both address racial prejudice directly, if not at times clumsily and in

embarrassing fashion over the years. Regardless they faced the issue head on. Consider that by the ninth issue of the first volume of *World Order* in December 1935, an explicit merger of Bahá'í theology with a discussion of racial prejudice appeared under the title “The World Issue of Race”. Authored by Horace Holley, the article broke stride with Andrews’ prior take that even the elimination of social, political, cultural and economic inequalities could fail to lessen prejudice. Rather, Holley framed racial prejudice as a symptom of both nationalism and economic struggle.

The race problem today reveals two different aspects: it intensifies a spirit of hostility arising not from race relations but from the conflict of states—a by-product of nationalism in its negative, aggressive manifestation; and it intensifies that antagonism among citizens of the same state whose ultimate source is economic competition. (Holley 1935, 321-322)

To put Holley’s stance in context, by 1935 many in the U.S. worried that a second world war was on the horizon. To address such anxieties, the nation embraced a policy of isolationism so as not to become, yet again, entangled in a multi-front European war (Accinelli 1987; Dunne 1987; McCulloch 2007). But the Bahá'í doctrine of internationalism, peace, and unity would not allow for a closed eye to these global issues (Abrams 2002; Garner 2017).

Bahá'í practitioners were far from the only group concerned. Sundry scholarly, literary, and journalistic voices (from H. G. Wells and H. R. Knickerbocker to John Maynard Keynes and Dorothy Thompson) warned of a second war resulting from the repercussions from the sanctions meted out in the Treaty of Versailles. The harsh economic conditions and distrust of liberal government made the fascist nationalism of the Reich appealing, coupled with the Nazi Party’s scapegoating of larger social, political, and economic issues as the fault of those who could not claim an “Aryan” identity. In September, just two months before Holley’s article appeared, the Nuremberg

Laws went into effect. Convened during the annual rally of the Nazi Party, these laws forbade both sexual relations and marriage between Jews and Germans and declared that only those of pure German blood (interpreted as White Aryans) could be citizens under the Reich. At the same time of the rise of race-based European Facism, the United States remained in the grips of the Great Depression. Economics was an arena of particular concern. Together, as interpreted by Holley as well as many other Bahá'í and religious practitioners, the ethno-racial prejudice of Aryanism and the economic catastrophe of 1929 was a repercussion of the lack of spirituality, that is moral virtues, applied to the realms of economics and government. Class inequality and nationalism would always be in ascendance within a spiritually-bereft society. On top of this, Holley would have been well-versed with Shoghi Effendi's prophecy of the second World War. Shoghi Effendi called World War I a "terrible conflict, the *first stage* [my emphasis] in a titanic convulsion long predicted by Bahá'u'lláh" (Effendi 1971 [1944], 305). And as early as 18 October 1927, in a letter to the NSA of the U.S. and Canada, Effendi predicted "another deadly encounter, the inevitability of which is alas! becoming increasingly manifest . . . [a] cataclysm" (Effendi 1927b, 145). In this milieu, racial prejudice was increasingly categorized as either epiphenomenal compared to, or as a result of, the "real" issues of nationalism and economic inequality.

And in taking Effendi's prior directives to use Bahá'í periodicals for the "promotion of its [the Bahá'í Faith's] principles in their entirety" (in *Bahá'í News* 1933, 6), Holley did not stop there. He reiterated the Bahá'í stance on the two-fold character of human nature, adding that racial prejudice "is one form of the primitive within every individual and every social group springing to action when the bestial-human element is

aroused” (Holley 1935, 322). In thus transcending race and materialism, as well as statecraft and economics, Holley made the Bahá’í approach unambiguous:

The Baha'i approach to this problem of race relations is spiritual and therefore universal. Baha'u'llah interprets the true history of religion to mean that man's social personality, at its highest and best, derives not from one's status as citizen but from one's status as member of one divine Faith. (Holley 1935, 322).

The Bahá’í theological appeal to ontological dualism, as well as the privileged place of economic considerations, was repeatedly reflected in *World Order* articles throughout the later-half of the 1930s. Accordingly the fifth issue of *World Order* (in 1935) stated bluntly, “Man has two natures, and in order that higher may dominate it is necessary to hold to some ideal” (Shook 1935, 193) while the preface to Dale S. Cole’s positive review of the “Endicott Johnson plan” (Johnson was an industrialist noted for his progressive labor policies and his early support of welfare capitalism) in the same issue of *World Order* read: “Too long has economics been regarded as a science unconcerned with the art of human relationships. As the old order fails, examples of statesmanship in the industrial field are recognized as vitally important” (Cole 1935, 197). Accordingly, Cole argued that Johnson’s welfare capitalism approach would upend racial prejudice. In a subsection entitled “Racial Amity”, Cole wrote:

The “Johnsonized” Valley harbors peoples of many nationalities at peace with each other and respecting themselves and their fellow workers, for George F. Johnson believes that “there can be no permanent dislike or trouble among honest people who will get acquainted, who will compare notes with one another, who will talk over their troubles and their pleasures and their daily lives; who will take one another into their confidence, in order that they may make righteous decisions and righteous judgments with respect to one another.” He seems to be able to have this belief lived. Thus does he not formulate a pattern of living and working which might well enlist the sympathetic interest of statesmen? (Cole 1935, 200)

Economics was not the only discipline anointed as a suitable partner to theology. Various social scientific fields were singled out as rapidly maturing and innovative fields that were quickly revealing the essential oneness and equality of humanity. For instance, an article by Maxwell Miller, a Bahá'í, entitled "Changing Race Relations" appeared in the June 1937 issue of *World Order* to address sociology and its role in the intellectual justification of racial supremacy that, in turn, laid the groundwork for the Third Reich:

The stupendous literature of so-called racial sociology since de Gobineau, by and large consists of elaborate justifications of the white man's history of world imperialism. The "white man's burden," his "civilizing mission," the doctrine of Nordic supremacy, and manifold variations on the theme have served to sanctify the bloody subjugation of other peoples to the advantage of the European Regretfully on the part of some, aggressively on the part of many, the myths of racial inferiority are held up as demonstrations of the workings of the Divine will among men. (Miller 1937, 111)

Pages later, Maxwell concluded his essay but did not regulate the discipline of sociology to the dumpster of outmoded history. Rather, he singled it out as having revised and updated its findings. He thus the social sciences appropriate sources for Bahá'ís in order to "learn to think straight":

The growing accuracy of social studies has displaced the shibboleths of racial inequalities, as the great religious teachings in the minds of those who truly understood cut through racial barriers as a sword. We must work singly and collectively to identify all our activities as individuals and to the disregard of group lines. Bahá'ís should be distinguished not by color, nationality, or race, but by the extent to which they fulfill in practice the teachings. We must learn to think straight, and to think as much as possible for ourselves. Having perceived the reality, we must immediately and without compromise translate the reality into social fact. (Miller 1937, 113)

In that same year of 1937, George Longe (a Black civic leader from New Orleans) published a similar article entitled "The Study of the Negro." Originally printed in the N.A.A.C.P. magazine *The Crisis*, Longe's piece argued forcefully and positively about the

work of social scientists to undermine anti-Black stereotypes and promote empirical studies of racial inequality:

In many of the advanced colleges and universities several liberal white professors are interested in research in race relations; Dr. Franz Boas and Dr. Melville Herskovitz in physical anthropology and Dr. Howard Odum and Dr. Johnson in Negro music and folk-lore are among those who have done much toward the movement for the study of the Negro in white colleges and universities. (Longe 1937, 391).

Concluding, Longe remarked that “after having been taught these facts concerning Negro life and history” that people would “develop sense of loyalty, and patriotism, and dependability in the Negro of today; greater face pride and self respect. They will be inspired to greater accomplishments, and the course will assist in bringing about a beneficial adjustment” (Longe 1937, 393). Following suit the following year, W. Russell Taylor’s 1938 article “The Possibility of Progress” mentioned the need for social science to combat Nazism and eugenics:

Leading contemporary authorities in the fields of race differences, anthropologists and psychologists such as Professors Franz Boas and Otto Klineberg of Columbia University among others, hold that fundamental differences in the behavior of racial groups are explicable on a cultural rather than on a biological basis. Individual heredity is, of course, a factor which must be reckoned with, but its scientific and logical social implications lead neither to a grossly distorted emphasis on race as expressed in present day Nazi Germany, nor to an anchoring of our social faith essentially in a school of eugenics. (Tylor 1938, 308)

Direct appeal to social science to provide material evidence for the religious belief in human equality across racial type, or even that racial type itself was a myth, proved a common strategy of *World Order* in the late 1930s. This tactic was particularly pronounced in another 1938 *World Order* essay entitled “Just How ‘Different’ is the Negro?” Reid Jackson, an African American Bahá’í and dean at the historically Black Wilberforce University, surveyed the social scientific research to conclude that any

intelligence to conclude that “the extent of Negro-white differences [is] . . . negligible when all factors are kept constant” (1938, 330). But, when Jackson posed the question, “what constitutes a ‘race’” he answered his own query with the quip that “no entirely satisfactory definition . . . has yet been formulated” (Jackson 1938, 327). He ended the essay with an optimistic tone that leaned on the possibilities of methodical inquiry: “Time and scientific experimentation alone will tell!” (1938, 330). “Race” was increasingly constructed as a meaningful category necessary for studying inequality, but a concept lacking in biological reality. Prejudice and racism, as a result, were increasingly derided as both an immoral and irrational response.

Race as Culture: Bond and Barrier

While social scientific empiricism was repeatedly wedded to theological arguments for racial equality through the late 1930s, this was not the only approach employed in *World Order*. While many of the aforementioned writers fought pseudo-scientific racism with new scientific discoveries, empirical data, and rigorous methodology in order to demonstrate the biological unity of mankind and that “race” failed to meet the criteria for differentiated species or variegated type, others distanced themselves from definitions, methods, or fields that appealed to biology or evolution. Instead, some authors turned to implicit connotations that circulated in the normative, popular culture of the day. “Race” was also articulated as a kind of shared bond that brought people together through a shared sense of interests relative to their collective treatment in an already stratified social order. “Race” was also depicted as an external ideological and institutionalized system of barriers that sorted people into stratified

groups who possessed divergent norms, worldviews, and attitudes. “Culture” became a loose synonym for “race” and vice versa.

World Order reprinted in 1935 an address delivered to the Chinese Social and Political Association by sociologist Herbert A. Miller. In the piece, Miller stated that race could be defined as “habits which a culture group imposes on those who are born and reared within it. There are race culture groups . . . subject to the same social environment” (Miller 1935, 245). Moreover, Miller’s stance also reflected a growing public anxiety over the Nazi party’s advocacy of racial nationalism, in which new forms of psychological theorizing have made “culture” *qua* “race” into a powerful political tool to mislead people:

Race is a present and impending political problem. The first concept of variation as biological was discarded; then it became psychological and proved to be equally unable to establish a criterion for the measurement of race. Then came the new psychology and a new type of explanation by culture patterns. The Nordic theory is a form of rationalization to justify the holding of power already obtained by ruthless methods . . . racial differentiation is a myth, but until the myth is exploded, it will play exactly the same kind of part in the politics of the world that religious myths have played. Its full day has not yet come, and our hope lies in having the explosion in the morning rather than waiting until after sunset (Miller 1935, 246).

Miller’s answer to the problem was simple: “A successful solution means the complete elimination of racial consciousness” (Miller 1935, 246). The cessation of such “racial consciousness” would be the result of the successful displacement of racial supremacist thinking and bunk appeals to essentialist and reified forms of static racial “cultures”

Much less critical than Miller, other authors began to tacitly conflate race with culture in varied ways throughout the 1930s, which opened the door to exploring how a shared spiritual belief and religious communal environment could form racial identity. Sometimes these interpretations were rather strained. Consider, for example, Louis

Gregory's 1936 review of W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* (1935) in which he lumps lavish praise on Du Bois:

This dark Cavalier of the Quill, sociologist as well as historian, widens the scope of the record so as to include not only the leaders, but general movements among the rank and file; mass psychology; the causes of poverty and distress as affecting those whom he champions as well as the nation as a whole; opportunism and idealism among statesmen; problems both past and present of the man in the street and the man with the hoe, white men and black. (Gregory 1936, 37-38).

Black Reconstruction was Du Bois's foremost expression of Marxism, in which he viewed the post-Bellum U.S. through a historical materialist lens. Among Du Bois's many points, two theses rise to the fore. First, Du Bois argued that race functioned to disunify workers and pit them against one another. For Du Bois, White workers received, rather than a material wage, a "public and psychological wage" which took the shape of:

public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them. (Du Bois 1935, 701)

Second, Du Bois emphasized Black slave agency in the Civil War, showing that Black slaves in the Confederate states engaged in a "General Strike" which significantly weakened Southern resources and facilitated the Union victory. However, Gregory did not engage with the two-fold thesis of *Black Reconstruction*. He emphasized that Blackness and religion were cultural entangled: "The Negro is inseparable from his religion. It colors all of his stations, from the Georgia chain gang to the United States Senate How would the black man against American competition support existence

or even attain it, without a hold upon God?” (Gregory 1936, 39). For Gregory, “culture” (in the expression of religious belief and lived experience) was at least partially constitutive of Blackness. But Gregory’s positive take on this association is a stretch, if not a departure, from Du Bois’s evaluation of religion in *Black Reconstruction*. On the one hand, Du Bois emphasized Black faith:

to most of the four million black folk emancipated by civil war, God was real. They knew Him. They had met Him personally in many a wild orgy of religious frenzy, or in the black stillness of the night. His plan for them was clear; they were to suffer and be degraded, and then afterwards by Divine edict, raised to manhood and power; and so on January 1, 1863, He made them free. (Du Bois 1935, 124)

Yet, on the other hand, Du Bois evaluated such exegesis as “foolish, bizarre, and tawdry. Gangs of dirty Negroes howling and dancing; poverty-stricken ignorant laborers mistaking war, destruction and revolution for the mystery of the free human soul” (Du Bois 1935, 124). Such nuance was not communicated by Gregory. Rather, Gregory emphasized the cultural manifestation of race *qua* religion neither as the Du Boisian “foolish” or “bizarre” nor as a “myth” as Miller had argued the year before, but as a life-saving buoy in the storm of oppressive conditions.

In another use of race as culture to sidestep biological arguments about race, Willard W. Beatty attempted to dislodge racist views of Native American people as possessing essentially distinct biological characteristics by reframing questions of racial difference and inequality as problems of resource attainment and cultural adaptation. In his 1938 essay, “The Adaptable Indian”, Beatty argued that “race” did not exist within people as a set of traits or attributes but rather was an illusory concept that manifested in the culture of a people who experienced inter-generational stratification of resources along the color-line. Beatty’s view was undoubtedly shaped by the watershed changes of

Roosevelt's "New Deal"—which took shape between 1933 and 1940 as a series of programs, public work projects, and financial reform and regulation—and how they were increasingly scrutinized for what effect they would have on racial inequality. In particular, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (sometimes called the "Indian New Deal") was engineered by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, an appointee of Roosevelt. The law protected and restored some land to indigenous Americans, encouraged self-government, increased educational opportunities, and made available federal credit for small farm agricultural production (Taylor 1980). Additionally, the New Deal program "Civilian Conservation Corps" (CCC) employed over 85,000 American Indigenous men between 1933 and 1942 to work on erosion control, forest management, roadwork, and more (Merrill 1981). Such sweeping policy changes on matters of race and resources were far from perfect but did inject increased attention on matters of racial colonialism into popular culture. Still, there was enduring racism in public discourse, and Beatty's article reflects a deep-seated racial paternalism toward the "American Indian," assuming a White readership that wishes to "teach" Indians how to use resources beneficial to them:

Indians, then, have given plenty of proof that they are willing to learn when they see something they want. They need time to be convinced of the fact The problem for Indians and for whites concerned in Indian education, is to find what elements of white teaching will be really useful to an Indian group, not a burden. (Beatty 1938, 332)

Despite these missteps, Beatty argued that "Indians" are neither backwards nor essentially different from Whites. Rather, Beatty made the point to accentuate Native culture and autonomy, which was a major legislative talking point emerging from the wake of New Deal changes.

In another instance of conceptualizing race as both an external barrier and set of cultural interests, James A. Scott published a two-part essay entitled “The Negro in America” (Scott 1938a, 1938b). Scott, an African American Bahá’í and principal of the Banneker School in St. Louis (then “Colored School #5”), emphasized, like Beatty, that racial barriers due to segregation and discrimination were at the heart of any empirical differences attributed to race: “The mutations and graduations of America’s discriminatory practices based on race would furnish material for a diverting doctor’s dissertation in social psychology” (Scott 1938a, 131). Again, these “discriminatory practices” were increasingly discussed throughout the 1930s, due in part to New Deal legislation. But in the public sphere of the 1930s, the New Deal was hardly romanticized or understood as the solution for racial inequality, as social movement theorist John Brueggemann (2002, 140) made clear:

The legislative record of the New Deal was consistently racialized and discriminatory During the 1930s, most Americans were opposed to extreme manifestations of fascism, but few felt urgent about the possibilities of serious progressive social change. In the midst of such ambivalence, the enduring racism of the public writ large and the rigidity of influential southern congressmen prohibited any chance of substantive civil rights legislation.

Scott’s article addressed this “ambivalence” through a discussion of both the “wealth of material” resources that existed in the U.S. which could be brought to bear in remediating racial inequality, while at the same time he spoke to the enduring legacy of anti-Black “distorted stereotypes.” “Race,” for Scott, exists as a particularly double-edged creation. In concluding the first part of his essay, Scott drove home the point that the categorization of race in general, and “the Negro” in particular, were America’s “fiction of its own creation”:

To the Negro as he has become today—a human being struggling against tremendous odds for a fairer participation in the benefits of modern civilization—there is scant allusion and what there is for the most part caricatures him as an absurdity or brands him a menace. This, despite the fact that nowhere in the world is to be found a wealth of material more suitable for sympathetic dramatic treatment than that centering about his plight. And when to continuous exposure to distorted stereotypes of what the Negro certainly is not now and perhaps never was is added a lack of contact with what he is, one can readily perceive that in dealing with the problems of a substantial tenth of its population. America is reacting to fictions of its own creation. (Scott 1938a, 137)

Despite the emphasis on racial matters, by 1940 American Bahá'í periodicals were rather ambivalent on either defining race or the function of racial prejudice. For example, a 1940 article “Is There Division of Race?” by Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick plainly illustrated a common complication with defining and conceptualizing race in relation to the twin-fold Bahá'í commitment to theological and scientific reasoning. Kirkpatrick, a Bahá'í from Kansas who had served on the editorial board of *Star of the West* and as an editor of *The Bahá'í World* (a periodical survey of Bahá'í activities under the direction of the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel) was well-versed in how to translate Bahá'í stances on myriad social issues into digestible and matter-of-fact articles. Yet, this would not be the case with her article on race:

Since in this day some are influenced more by what science says than by what the Prophet of God says let us look briefly at what scientists report in regard to this intricate race question as well as note more fully the teaching of Baha'u'llah. In regard to the meaning of the word “race” we are told that “no one has ever defined the word ‘race’ to the satisfaction of the whole world.” I understand this to mean that scientists cannot agree upon any basis for classifying the human race into divisions. (Kirkpatrick 1940, 415)

With a discursive shrug, American Bahá'í periodicals vacillated between appeals to culture or biology, leaving the specifics of “race” beyond readers’ reach. As a consequence, the discursive construction of race was rather confusing and contradictory,

leaving no clear definition as to what “race” really was or how or why prejudice and racism functioned as it did. Perhaps due to such ambivalence, American Bahá’í discourse would increasingly appeal to the divinity of Bahá’u’lláh and Bahá’í theology as a form of metaphysical education that would somehow supersede materialist and scientific debates about the nature of race and racial prejudice. Regardless of intent, the editorial choice to allow for a multiplicity of interpretations, arguments, and commentary on race and racial prejudice may have undermined racial essentialism and biological determinism. That is, by depicting “race” as a contested concept, many readers may have been able to escape its taxonomic grip. American periodical discourse would increasingly promote allegiance to Bahá’í teachings and Bahá’u’lláh as the gateway to more potent and usable epistemologies and ways of knowing the realities of race. This would prove particularly effective as the U.S. entered World War II and in the economic and social changes of the post-War era.

Emphasizing Spiritual Education for “Race Unity”

The American entrance into the war in December 1941 changed how race manifested in the pages of *World Order*. Attention shifted to discussion of peace, war, aggression, law, and justice, especially in the arena of international relations. Authors increasingly avoided the thorny issue of defining race or illuminating the scientific causes of prejudice or racism operations and in their place made broad appeals to equality between the races and to abandon racial prejudice—what “race” meant or how “prejudice” worked. For instance, Robert Kenney’s 1944 article “World Democracy and the Races” reads:

I do not think this audience needs a discussion of the fact that anthropologists not only disagree with political concepts of race but deny that any one race is by nature superior to another. Nor do I think it is worth the time of this audience to deal with the fact,--which is clear to anyone's eyes,--that difference between so-called races are not as great as differences which may be found between different members of the same race What I shall say on this subject must be understood to be based on the tenet that, whatever physical differences may exist, the races are entitled to equality in the tribunal of international law. (Kenney 1944, 21-22).

In what remained of discourse on race, the phrase “Race Unity” was quickly eclipsing the prior dominance of “Race Amity”. American Bahá'í periodical discourse emphasized less and less the scientific and specific rationales for racial equality and instead foregrounded appeals to the Bahá'í principle of unity as both educational method and pedagogical goal. For example, and reflecting the greater availability of translated and published Bahá'í authoritative writings in the West, the 1942 appearance of an index of scriptural references, entitled simply “Bahá'í Lessons: Race Unity” was organized in four parts: I. Spiritual Truth of Oneness of Mankind; II. Grave Importance of Modern Race Problems; III. Baha'i Solution for Race Problems: Human Unity, and; IV. Guardian calls for vigorous action in America. A note on the bottom of the page reads:

The use of Bahá'í Lessons each month does not require all of the Bahá'í books for which references are given. But when all the books are available the student can more thoroughly acquaint himself with all of the teachings on a given subject. He can also familiarize himself with definite passages of Bahá'í literature as well as with the teachings (“Bahá'í Lessons: Race Unity” 1942, 364).

With the globe engulfed in war, and many seemingly frustrated at the lack of clear scientific and secular solutions for human prosperity and peace, the focus on the Divine power of Bahá'í teachings to combat and resolve all social issues, including racial prejudice and inequality, was of growing appeal. This stance was often wedded to expressions of American exceptionalism in which American Bahá'í endeavors to move

beyond race to emphasize human oneness were supercharged as soteriological imperatives. Consider Phyllis Durroh's 1943 article "Tabernacle of Unity" which responded to the zeitgeist of nihilism and dominant attitudes rife with war-torn frustration, by beginning: "On the Baha'is of the Americas, rests the hope of the world! We are the only nations now left who can upraise the banner of our glorious Faith" (Durroh 1943, 378). Then, bearing such a mantle, and from the standpoint of an American Bahá'í attentive to race in the midst of the second world war, addressed the "problems" of three ethno-racial groups: "In order to reach them, we must understand something of their problems. Let us consider briefly three groups – the Negro, the Jew, the Japanese" (Durroh 1943, 379). After addressing the Japanese internment camps, the historical scapegoating of Jewish people for an array of social difficulties, and the lynching and segregation of African Americans, Durroh first made an appeal to science:

Among anthropologists, the opinion is growing that these distinctions in peoples are merely the results of climate, geography, education, environment and other accidental conditions. They tell us, moreover, that there are no races in any exact sense; that the so-called pure, superior or inferior races are myths; that any attempt we may make to classify men according to these arbitrary groupings is scientifically unjustifiable; that there is no such thing as instinctive race antipathy. There is only false education or the fear that the interests of other peoples are contrary to our own. (Durroh 1943, 380)

Then, after emphasizing that "sociologists", "scientists and other writers", "play and sports" and "labor solidarity" and more all have made "efforts [that] are commendable" (Durroh 1943, 382), Durroh emphasized that the true solution was spiritual:

But, in the last analysis, God is the great Remover of difficulties. Only a Divine Plan can succeed "The Negro, the Jew, the Japanese and all the other minorities are hungry for this message. The Baha'f Faith alone can give it Only the love of God and the understanding of His teachings offer a satisfactory and permanent solution of this problem. (Durroh 1943, 382-383)

Such a stance was reiterated the in Mary Elsie Austin's article "Social Basis in World Unity" (1944). Austin became a Bahá'í in 1934, and was a well-known and respected civil rights activist. A lawyer who served as consultant for the N.A.A.C.P. and the National Council of Negro Women, as well as the eighth national president of the Black sorority Delta Sigma Theta, she would be elected to the NSA of the Bahá'ís of the U.S. in 1945. Writing the year before in 1944, she emphasized that "The Baha'i Faith is first of all a Faith which harmonizes the inward incentives and outward procedures to unity. Outward procedures give the means for unity and inward incentives give the heart for unity" (Austin 1944, 125). Writing that "so many of the bona fide efforts for unity are being fatally compromised because they must be launched through the established social patterns which preserve old disunities" (Austin 1944, 126), Austin then anointed the spiritual teachings on human oneness or "unity" across racial groups as both goal and method. Such instrumentalism lay at the heart of Bahá'í praxis for Austin; only by living a life of racial unity supercharged by new spiritual teachings from God would one achieve racial unity:

There are really no diversities of race to those who truly accept the fact that all mankind is God's creation. Yet the outward differences of color, physiognomy and culture have annoyed and divided us. When members of the human family meet each other who have striking differences in appearance and manners, they resort very naturally to reactions of fear, distaste and derision, which grow out of the human complex for conformity and the fear of strangeness. Unity of mankind is not only a basic principle in the Baha'i Faith, but it is also the basis of a new social pattern in terms of which Baha'is worship, work, educate themselves and contribute their capacities to civilization. (Austin 1944, 128)

She concluded simply that "the great realisms of the Bahá'í Faith lie in its new spiritual teachings and in the new spiritual patterns which they provide for needed development of mankind" (Austin 1944, 129).

Such appeals to the transformational pedagogy of Bahá'í teachings increased as the war continued. By June 1945, just two months shy of the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August, Annamarie Kunz Honnold's article "Signs of the Times" argued that despite the "incredible destruction of the war" that there were signs of an international Bahá'í society forming: "Hardly a day passes without our discerning signs pointing in the direction of tomorrow's world order . . . we are impressed with their international aspect" (Honnold 1945, 77). In the midst of global war that circumambulated the issue of race in divergent ways—as Americans fought the specter of White nationalism in its Nazi manifestation while failing to exorcize its expression in the inhumane internment of Japanese Americans and the sanction of anti-Asian violence—Honnold saw fissures in Jim Crow and declining support for racial segregation in public discourse:

Charles Rumford Walker (November 5, 1944) speaks of the sacrifice necessary to have peace: "We must pay in terms of liquidated prejudices and long overdue reforms in the treatment, for example, of our racial minorities." Speaking of races, the Baha'i sees hopeful beginnings on the racial front. Lillian Smith, a white woman in the deep South, vividly portrays the plight of the Negro in *Strange Fruit* and in writing of her novel (May 28, 1944) says it "is concerned with this restricting, crippling frame of segregation". The Times also printed "A Negro's Plea for Understanding" (November 12, 1944). Here Harry V. Richardson, Chaplain of Tuskegee Institute, states that "Only as all have opportunity to attain similar advantages is anyone secure in an advantage he happens to hold." (Honnold 1945, 78-79)

Born to Bahá'í parents and trained in sociology, Honnold applied Bahá'í principles to pressing social issues on a world scale, and would years later (in the 1960s and '70s) serve as the American Bahá'í community's representative to the United Nations. Honnold translated the racial conflicts and debates of the 1940s as poignant signs of Bahá'í prophecy: "The Baha'i here finds a vision beyond the Lesser Peace, an

unconscious striving toward Baha'u'llah's Most Great Peace" (Honnold 1945, 77). Her commitment to this lens, of reading racial discourse as a sign of the Bahá'í Faith's infallibility and of that faith as the sole source of solutions for racial prejudice, was stated bluntly in her conclusion: "His [Bahá'u'lláh's] plan overshadows all others in depth and vision, in wisdom and inclusiveness. The Bahá'í is hopeful in discovering frequent signs leading to the only perfect way – the world order of Bahá'u'lláh" (Honnold 1945, 79).

Skepticism with Science in the Search for Race Unity

The magnitude of the war and its devastation, alongside the explicit appeals to, and practices of, both racial eugenics and segregation both in Pacific and European theaters as well as within the boundaries of the U.S., made the prospect of secular political and social solutions so daunting that only a spiritual revolution seemed equal to the task of bringing about racial unity. If people were searching for mystical, metaphysical, or otherwise spiritual powers that could transcend the empirical and rational renderings of racial inequality—what the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal had just labeled in 1944 as the quintessential "American Dilemma"—then American Bahá'í periodical discourse supplied answers clear and simple. Only spiritual belief in God's latest Messenger Bahá'u'lláh could wipe away bias and prejudice from the hearts of people. Only the Bahá'í teachings supplied blueprints for new modes of governance, novel economic models, and novel steps for conflict resolution all commensurate with an racially equitable and just world.

The rendering of a secular world unable to effectively grapple with race was also reiterated in *World Order's* increase in publishing reviews of books on racial matters throughout the 1940s: *The Races of Mankind* by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (Dahl

1944); *Black Boy* by Richard Wright (Dahl 1946); *One Nation* by Wallace Stegner (Dahl 1947); *Black Metropolis* by St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Jr. (Hutchens 1947), as well as *Race and Man*, a compilation of Bahá'í articles on race that emphasized the Divine solution to all social problems throughout history, which has no equal in secular or “man-made” knowledge (Gift 1945). The 1945 review of *Race and Man* in *World Order* by Harvey Maye Gift thus states that the “ideals and accomplishments of the Baha'i Faith outlined in the introductory pages ‘present no isolated phenomenon’” but that they rather indicate:

that the great civilizations Jewish, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Christian and Muhammadan have sprung from the impetus imparted by a unique spiritual genius, the Prophet of the age. The coming world order cannot be made up of a conglomeration of mutually exclusive and conflicting man-made formulae. The new world order will be the expanding expression of spiritual truth in social forms suited to twentieth century needs and aspirations. (Gift 1945, 385)

By the late 1940s, there was growing post-war optimism marked by economic growth and a resurgence in religious commitments as many Americans seemed eager to drink from spiritual wells. That is, religious membership, church funding, institutional building, and traditional faith and practice began to increase in the U.S. as a “new generation of seekers” (Roof and Greer 1993) emerged in the baby boomer cohort (Silk 1989; Wuthnow 1990). Moreover, there was decreasing confidence in the moral efficacy and pragmatism of Jim Crow as the Civil Rights movement began to pick-up steam. Accordingly, American Bahá'í periodicals constructed race and racial prejudice, even when addressing scientific data and conclusions, as core spiritual matters. Racial prejudice was the result of the materialist or animal side of humanity, an evil aspect of humanity that if left unchecked and uneducated by spiritual and religious instruction, would grow to infect entire communities. Consider two issues in Volume 12, Issue 10 of

World Order (January 1947). One, entitled “The Anatomy of Prejudice”, was written by biologist Duart V. Brown. Brown took an early confrontational stance, writing: “But what of prejudices of man against man . . . are they too inherited? Scientists line up in an almost 100% ‘no!’ . . . [prejudice is] almost entirely a result of the influence of environment” (Brown 1947, 289). Brown then questioned how racial prejudice persists into adulthood, answering his own question as such:

It comes mostly sugar-coated as do all temptations to evil. The individual sees in himself the center of the universe since naturally, so far as he is concerned, all the world revolves around him. He tends to draw to himself that which is pleasant for his ego and reject that which is unpleasant The prejudiced man has decided to gratify his lust for self importance. This is the sugar-coating around the idea that he is superior to man with a colored skin. (Brown 1947, 290-291).

Brown then connected the ego-driven impulse to prejudice not as a natural consequence of biology, but as a corruption of both the material and spiritual aspects of humanity: “This infantile belief in anything that will strengthen your own ego is the very opposite of the return to the pure-heartedness of childhood advocated by God” (Brown 1947, 291).

Following Brown’s article was a republication of a speech given to the Adult Education Council Workshop of Cincinnati, Ohio by Joseph Lander, a medical doctor with training in psychiatry. Originally published in *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, Lander’s speech made abundantly clear the importance of the topic: “I don’t believe I overstate the matter when I say that if the problem of racial and group prejudice is not dealt with soundly, rationally, and successfully, the human race will not survive” (Lander 1947, 292). At first, Lander appeared to attack the claim that prejudice is in any form innate or based in biological instinct: “By far the greatest amount of prejudice is what we call culturally determined; it exists in the early environment of the child in every community there is not the slightest evidence that anyone has such inborn prejudice

against others of a different color” (Lander 1947, 292). Yet, he then appealed to evolutionary psychology and the belief that aggression, as a primitive affect, could be harnessed by environmental factors to fuel racial prejudice:

We are all born with a certain fund of aggressive drive, a certain urge to mastery, a quantity of competitiveness and activity expressing itself in a need to assert in a positive fashion one’s own individuality. What happens to the normal aggressive drive after one leaves the playgrounds? When the environment is conducive to racial or group prejudice, many people can drain off their hostilities, their aggressiveness, their drive to mastery in asserting their dominance over some so-called lower race or group. (Lander 1947, 293).

Lander’s synthesis of biological and environmental factors book-ended Brown’s approach. Accordingly, the synopsis within the “With Our Readers” section of the *World Order* issue, recapped Brown’s and Lander’s articles:

Many groups of thoughtful people are keenly aware that the various forms of racial and class prejudices existing today are a real danger threatening social and economic life. In his article “Racial and Group Prejudice” Dr. Joseph Lander gives us a careful analysis of the causes and effects of this disease which must be understood before applying a remedy Duart Brown attacks this problem of prejudice from a somewhat different angle but with equal emphasis on its dangers in his article, “The Anatomy of Prejudice.” (*World Order* 1947, 319)

Their approach was indicative of both the unease and debate over the precise definitions of race and the causes and operations of racial prejudice as well as the increased appeal to spirituality as the sole solution to racial matters.

In a post-war era in which many were now all too-well familiar with the horrors of atomic warfare, many worried that the cold, calculating rationality of science might, if applied too broadly to humanity, either ignore or downplay humanity’s capacity for moral choice, transforming the human condition into little more than animal instincts or a soulless machine. The “scientism” of the 1940s was under greater scrutiny, and there was a tendency to trace social ills such as racism to the dominance of scientific ideology

and practice (Kirby 2013; Kleinman 2000). Yet, Bahá'í theology held anything but an anti-science leaning and American Bahá'í periodical discourse reconciled this tension by emphasizing the ontological duality of humanity. For instance, in the very next issue following Brown's and Lander's articles, Gertrude K. Henning begged readers to understand that solutions to racial prejudice would be found in "both scientific teachings and spiritual laws" and that from both one "may deduce that whatever prejudice there is in the world has been made by man himself" (Henning 1947, 339). Henning became co-editor of *World Order* in October of 1943, and she used her editorial prerogative to at times overstate the case, writing matter-of-factly, "In the Baha'i community there is no racial discrimination." Despite this, Henning constructed a simple model in which racial inequality was placed as a consequence of the two-fold tension of human nature [material (physical and biological) and spiritual (mind and soul)]. Henning discussed how the former birthed prejudice which would run unchecked if not for control and subjugation of it by the latter. Overall, articles like Henning's in the late 1940s framed such an understanding of race as more than an academic exercise; they portrayed such endeavors as crucial to the fulfillment of both individual and societal potential promised in Bahá'í scripture.

For example, a 1948 article by Stanwood Cobb (no longer a co-editor of *World Order* at that time), entitled "Why Can't We Be Friends?" read:

As regards these racial prejudices it must be realized that we are dealing with very deep seated emotions springing from biological sources. To primitive man the stranger is always an enemy, something to be feared and distrusted. These antagonistic fears and prejudgments so innate in man's psychology are very difficult to eliminate. Admirable as are all cultural attempts to eliminate intolerance, it seems to the writer that only a spiritual attack upon his human weakness can be successful. (Cobb 1948, 185).

Cobb then made the Bahá'í-inspired point he felt was missing amongst the “current secular attempts.” Only love of all people, underpinned by divine power that purifies and amplifies that love sufficiently, could transform and animate the human mind and spirit enough to conquer one’s base instincts and impulses toward prejudice: “The one factor missing in current secular attempts to eliminate prejudice and intolerance from the world—universal love—was expounded a generation ago by ‘Abdu’l-Baha . . . this is the one perfect Love, possible to all mankind, and can only be achieved by the Power of the Divine Spirit” (Cobb 1948, 186). Such triumphalism would be the last word on race and racial prejudice in *World Order* until 1966.

Summation

The last years of *World Order* in the 1930s and ‘40s were marked by engagement with the second World War and its intersection with economic and racial matters, debates over the place of science or religion to adjudicate on racial prejudice, and an increased use of “culture” as a stand-in for race. Many of these debates would not be resolved, even as they picked up pace and salience in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s. *World Order* would shutter its doors just before the turn into the new decade.

In a 28 February 1949 letter from Shoghi Effendi to the American Bahá'í Community, he advised suspension of the magazine “for next two years” (Effendi 1970, 65). Rather than devote finances and energy to the periodical, he instead appealed “to subscribers in East and West to devote their subscription fee to Temple Fund. Owing to present emergency such action would be highly meritorious” (Effendi 1970, 65-66). That “emergency situation” was an extreme budget shortfall caused by lingering economic depression and the disruptions of the war, which drastically slowed donations to

Wilmette from Bahá'ís around the world. The lack of funds threatened the achievement of the goals of the Bahá'í administrative strategy entitled the “Seven Year Plan” (1946–1953), chief amongst these were the completion of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (House of Worship) in Wilmette, for which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had laid the cornerstone in 1912 and which Effendi called the “Mother Temple of the West” as the first built in the Western hemisphere. On 22 December 1949, Effendi increased the austerity measures: “Further drastic reduction budget next two-years including temporary suspension Public Relations, National Programming, Radio activities, World Order and Bahá'í World publications, permissible if necessary” (Effendi 1970, 69).

World Order was shelved indefinitely. As the Civil Rights movement gathered steam and debates about racial equality, integration, nationalism, and more entered the consciousness of nearly all residents in the United States, Bahá'í periodical discourse was not there to cover it. Missing landmark legal decision and jolting assassinations, *World Order* would not return until 1966, when writers began to cover those events in hindsight.

Chapter IX.

Racism, the Culture of Poverty, and Color-Blindness (1966-1989)

Medgar Evers, a civil rights activist and the N.A.A.C.P.'s first field secretary in Mississippi, was assassinated in the driveway of his home in 1963. That same year, a bomb blast at the Birmingham, Alabama Sixteenth Street Baptist Church killed four school-age girls: Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley. In 1964, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—all three “Freedom Riders” to Mississippi—were assassinated. A striking number of civil rights activists with over religious affiliations were killed in 1965: Christian minister James Reeb was beaten to death by a mob in Selma, Alabama; Unitarian Universalist member Viola Liuzzo was shot to death in Alabama; former Nation of Islam minister Malcolm X was gunned down in New York City; and the Episcopal seminarian Jonathan Myrick Daniels was shot point blank by shotgun near Haynesville, Alabama. From the social gospel Christian tradition and Reform Judaism's social justice initiatives to the Islamic imperative to oppose the practice of *riqab* (bondage) and more, the murders of these figures represent the violent backlash to the application of religious traditions and moral imperatives to the racial equality movement of the early 1960s.

It was not until after these events, in 1966, that *World Order* returned. Unfortunately, the nearly two-decade long hiatus of the journal overlapped with much of the U.S. civil rights movement. Debate over racial equality sat in front seat of the American zeitgeist. Many religious adherents saw their callings as intimately involved in

the fight against prejudice and racism, even as both violent pushbacks and political quietism threatened their involvement. Now a quarterly magazine (publishing issues in October, January, April, and July) and co-edited by Firuz Kazemzadeh, Howard Garey, Monroe E. Michels, and Muriel Michels, the reissued Volume 1, Number 1 (in Fall 1966) of *World Order* stated: “WORLD ORDER is a publication of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States. It is intended to stimulate, inspire and serve thinking people in their search to find relationships between contemporary life and contemporary religious teachings and philosophy” (*World Order* 1966, 2). While overseen by the NSA, there was no stated or implicit pressure to conform to particular interpretations or doctrine. Rather, printed on the bottom of the same page in small italics, read the following lines: “*The views expressed herein are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the United States, nor of the Editorial Board*” (*World Order* 1966, 2).

In this milieu, in which not only assassinations of civil and human rights activists occurred with unbearable frequency but seemingly progressive legislation concerning racial equality was slowly being passed into law (e.g., the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1966 *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections* decision that found poll taxes unconstitutional), the first issue of *World Order* said little of race. However, one article entitled “A Pattern for Future Society” stated in passing that the peoples of the world had now “endured two world wars and are threatened with a third; we are burdened with the cancer of widespread racial prejudice” (Dahl 1966, 14).

This tepid acknowledgement was, however, followed by a rather bold paragraph:

This brings each Baha'i into active participation in the affairs of his Faith, which expects a great deal of him. No one is a casual bystander. The

process is not always easy, for many of the Baha'i principles contradict prejudices and attitudes carried over from earlier life, or prevalent in one's environment. People do not change overnight. But an energetic effort to apply these principles is being made and considerable progress achieved in such difficult fields as race relations and the instilling of spiritual attitudes in group consultation. (Dahl 1966, 15-16)

A reader might logically assume that future issues of *World Order* would address and promote attention to race and racial prejudice head-on, linking Bahá'í theological injunctions with the pragmatic work of achieving racial amity, unity, and equality in the fight against racial prejudice and racism. For instance, the first issue of the third volume (published in 1968) was the first to address the aforementioned assassinations, now in the wake of both the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy:

In the light of summer 1967, the brutal assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 1968, the days immediately following his death, the battle of guns, more killings, the burning, looting, the hardening of negative attitudes between blacks and whites, June 5, 1968—call it what you may, but hatred of one for another struck down Sen. Robert Kennedy— the question which the people of the U.S. must answer today is, “Is there still time?” “Is there still time to unite a dangerously divided nation?” (Jackson 1968, 5)

World Order discourse would answer definitively—“yes.” However, the second run of *World Order* from 1966 to 1989 would prove highly variant in constructing the concepts of race and racial prejudice toward material and spiritual salvation.

In what follows, I address this variation from the tail-end of the Civil Rights movement until 1989 when, again, *World Order* momentarily stopped publishing. Many authors linked prejudice and racism with the modern character of American society, while others placed the blame for racial inequality and racial animus at the feet of the supposed dysfunctions and pathologies of the “culture” (often the reified “cultures” of people of color). And still others moved-on from the prior discussion of the causes of racism and racial inequality to instead render either a historical overview of American

Bahá'í engagement with racial matters or to imagine a future Bahá'í society free of racial inequities and hostilities.

The Racism of American Society

The second author to address racial prejudice in the rebooted *World Order* was Glenford Mitchell, in his review of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which had just been published in 1965. Appearing in the second issue in 1966, Mitchell first reviewed the book as a timeline of Malcolm's progression from hustler to Orthodox Sunni Muslim, while he subtly related Malcolm's intertwined understanding of race and religion to that of the Bahá'í Faith's principle of the "oneness of mankind." Importantly, this article contained one of, if not *the*, first mention of "racism" in American Bahá'í periodical discourse:

Malcolm's light, joy, and freedom fused themselves into a quest for the "oneness of mankind" among the variegated American populace. He had come to believe that "... if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of Man - and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their 'differences' in color . . . But as racism leads America up the suicide path, I do believe, from the experiences that I have had with them, that the whites of the younger generation, in the colleges and universities, will see the handwriting on the wall and many of them will turn to the spiritual path of truth-the only way left to America to ward off the disaster that racism inevitably must lead to." Viewed through the haze of hatred associated with his name, this expression of belief was paradoxical. But paradox, as we often accept it, is a potent spice of history and Malcolm's life is certainly a matter of American historical, as well as sociological, cognizance It is an indictment of the prejudiced society in which we now live that the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* has not appeared on the best-seller list. (Mitchell 1966, 38).

A steadfast Bahá'í, Mitchell was born in Jamaica and moved to the U.S. to attend college and work in the publishing industry (in 1968 Mitchell was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and in 1982 was elected to the Universal House

of Justice on which he served until 2008). Such statements that society itself was prejudiced and that racism had put America on a “suicide path” (albeit a quotation from Malcolm X, but no less potent by any means), all but leapt from the page due to Mitchell’s blunt and unfiltered criticism of the race problems in the U.S. Picking up where *World Order* left off in 1949, Mitchell resurrected the language of cataclysm in regard to race. The utter magnitude of racism and its recalcitrant entrenchment in the fiber of American society thus necessitated the construction of a kind of apocalypticism that lent itself to only spiritual solutions. Coupled with Malcolm X’s rather fiery and pull-no-punches criticism of American racism, Mitchell’s take may have propelled him into a more substantive role. By 1968, Mitchell was named a co-editor of the journal.

But before that would occur, the very next mention of race, like Mitchell’s, also appeared in a book review. Edwin S. Redkey’s review of William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (published by Random House in 1967) would use the historical text to address modern racial prejudice. Redkey stated, also using the word “racism”:

At the root of our current racial problem lies slavery. The traditions of segregation and prejudice stemmed from it.. Black ghettos got their start in the slave quarters of ante-bellum southern cities. To change the racial climate we must understand our racism, whether it be blatant, obvious and cruel, or subtle, sophisticated, and just as cruel; we must know what it was like to be a slave. (Redkey 1968, 46).

The civil rights era saw not just social movements and legislative action, but also new academic takes on old questions. A scholar of American history and race relations, who taught at Yale, Middlebury College, and the University of Tennessee, Redkey was well-acquainted with how historians and social scientists were questioning the prior-settled ideas about slavery, economics, and race. Redkey thus emphasized how Styron’s book,

alongside others such as Stanley Elkins' *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, helped the reader to understand the historical and psycho-social underpinnings of prejudice. However, Redkey then stated that "it takes a work of creative imagination" (Redkey 1968: 48) and stated that as "fiction the book is a success" (Redkey 1968, 48) that was necessary to read in the current political context: "But after studying Nat Turner's revolt and its causes, he [Styron] might have predicted that oppression would once again drive Negroes to rebellion. Read this book, but beware—in learning of the past you will become painfully aware of the present" (Redkey 1968, 49).

In Redkey's rendering, active agents with racialized power (rarely named explicitly as White people) acted in prejudiced ways and hindered the unification of humanity. Similar examples include the above book reviews as well as Hugh Jackson's "Human Rights and Employment"—a reprint of a speech made at the 1968 Bahá'í-sponsored "Human Rights Conference" held in Wichita, Kansas. Jackson wrote, "There is no more ugly and urgent crisis facing this nation today than the economic insecurity of black Americans" (Jackson 1968, 5). He then cited the Bahá'í Statement on Human Rights, issued at the Baha'i Intercontinental Conference in 1967, which did not mince words regarding how the use of racial prejudice in the form of discrimination was a threat to civilization itself: "Discrimination or unjust restriction against persons under any pretext poisons our relationships and thereby creates conflicts which threaten to destroy our civilization. This is undoubtedly the gravest sickness infecting our age" (Jackson 1968, 5). He then focused the broad condemnation of prejudice on the issue of anti-black discrimination:

More specifically, the effects of employment discrimination on blacks are to concentrate employment of blacks in certain industries; to limit them to

the lowest occupational levels of these industries; to completely exclude them from many industries; to limit their income; and to reduce their opportunities for promotion. (Jackson 1968, 5-6).

These were not simply the actions of biased individuals, but for Jackson—and his read of Bahá'í teachings—were a systemic injustice that ran counter to both God's will and sound social policy. He then spent pages addressing the nuances of various causal factors that contributed to systemic discrimination against Black people, such as a dearth of apprenticeship opportunities, inadequate counseling, unrealistic job recruiting programs, underemployment, bad training programs, the ill location of jobs, policing, bad debt records, health problems, inadequate child care, and many others. Perhaps evoking Vladimir Lenin and the socialist movement, which held a sometimes tenuous but at least symbolically-aligned cooperative relationship with certain groups within the Black Power movement of the late 1960s, Jackson wrote, “What must be done? An immediate action agenda is called for and demanded *now*” (Jackson 1968, 11), to which he appended more pages of solutions to the aforementioned problems.

By leaps and bounds, and in addition to being the first article in *World Order* to address the assassinations of the 1960s, Jackson's article was the most thorough explanation as to the variables that were co-constitutive of racial prejudice and discrimination alongside pragmatic and well-reasoned solutions that many people shunned, as Jackson remarked, to “avoid seeing the slum, and avoid looking into the eyes of the victims of racism—eyes in which the hopelessness, despair, and even hate, have grown as conditions worsen” (Jackson 1968, 13). He then specifically called out Bahá'ís to then look upon these issues directly, writing again with a millennialist overtone: “What Can BAHÁ'ÍS DO? If you are an employer, enough said. Otherwise you have the responsibility as never before in your daily lives, no matter what your station in life may

be, to make a reality of the “Human Rights are God-Given Rights”—*the Bahá’í Statement on Human Rights*” (Jackson 1968, 13). Jackson’s article breathed fire but did not leave the reader scorched with harsh or one-sided critique. It was even-handed in its construction of racial prejudice as both a spiritual and social sickness that required the application of divine virtues in policy, law, and behavior.

Into the 1970s, authors occasionally mentioned the unjust rationalizations that lay at the heart of race, that is, that “race” was never a neutral or amoral categorization system. For instance, John Dumbrill broached the subject of defining race in his 1970 article “Notes from No-Man’s-Land: Observations on Interracial Adoption.” Like those before him, Dumbrill acknowledged the racist character of American society, and thereby sought to demarcate “race” within the context of an unequal and hierarchical social structure. A self-identified White Bahá’í and parent of adopted children of color, Dumbrill recognized how the categorial system of race interpellated his children into categories that felt, in their lived experience, as antagonistic to people situated in different racial categories. For Dumbrill, “race” functioned as an inescapable sorting mechanism that taught newly racialized children (and later adults) to pick sides in an antagonistic battle: “millions of interracial human beings in our society are forced by the ‘blacks’ and the ‘whites’ to choose sides” (Dumbrill 1970, 20). Moreover, like the triumphalism of American Bahá’í periodical discourse in the post-war era, which deemed Bahá’ís, due to their faith and piety, as having escaped prejudice, Dumbrill wrote: “The most well-meaning individual cannot trust himself to be without bias in a society that bombards him constantly with racism” (Dumbrill 1970, 19), but pages later wrote that the

American Bahá'í community is a “home society totally approving of racial mixture” (Dumbrill 1970:22).

Dumbrill composed his essay on the heels of the apex of the Black Power movement. Written in the climate of Black nationalism with some arguing that strong, single-race, Black families could serve as a buffer to racial inequality and anti-Black discrimination, some opposed “inter-racial” or “trans-racial” adoption. In fact, just two years after Dumbrill’s article was published, the National Association of Black Social Workers would take an official stand against “trans-racial” adoption. Contra this position, Dumbrill was pessimistic that “race” could ever function in a positive way. By the essay’s end, he proposed a color-blind solution in which children would be somehow raised with non-racial identities: “The natural thing to do . . . would be not to classify such children in regard to race at all. It takes a forced effort to put them on one side of the imaginary racial line or the other” (Dumbrill 1970, 20). Other articles continued to construct a view of race as a structural and fixed categorization system rooted in amoral rationalizations for maltreatment. For example, in his 1974 article “Economics and Moral Values,” William Hatcher wrote:

The attitude of white Christian slave masters toward black slaves in nineteenth-century America further illustrates the force of Jesus’ teaching in a strangely negative way. Realizing that the perpetration of brutal enslavement on a fellow human was contrary to the Christian view of man, some white Christians persuaded themselves that blacks were not men—that is, that they were a sub-human species. This allowed them to enslave blacks and salve their consciences at the same time. It also explains why superficial racial differences were so important in the white view of slavery. It was the only way that slavery could be morally justified in Christian terms. (Hatcher 1974, 18)

The following year in 1975, Nosratollah Rassekh published “Melting Pot or Boiling Cauldron: The Ethnic Experience in America”. A professor of history at the

College of William and Mary, Rassekh offered a highly detailed overview of racial conflict and assimilation in North America throughout different historical eras, as well as the historiographical debates concerning those periods. Emphasized throughout were the extreme injustices and contradictions leveled at varied non-White racial groups by varied European empires, the U.S. government, and White-dominated society: “racism per se had persisted, and resistance to change was just about as high as ever” (Rassekh 1975, 26). After this *tour de force*, and toward the end of the article, Rassekh’s asked the poetic question, “Whither America?” He answered:

Separatism, however, is not the answer to the American dilemma. If ethnic separation may provide selfhood for the ethnic community, it may also threaten the self-hood of the individual citizen in the community. There is no practical way that the continent could be so divided geographically as to accommodate all the major ethnic groups. The American nationality is still forming; its processes are mysterious, and the final form, if there is ever to be a final form, is as yet unknown. But a common consciousness on one level or another is a prerequisite. (Rassekh 1975, 26)

Even though Raseskh was a practicing Bahá’í, he did not offer Bahá’í theology or teachings as a possible foundation for that “common consciousness”, but instead concluded: “Order is required, and the strongest source of ‘order’ is spiritual” (Rassekh 1975, 26).

With an appeal to a spiritual or religious order made clear as the solution to racial inequality and segregation, the editors of the same issue in which Rassekh’s article appeared, appended “Conversations with Americans.” As the editors put it, “with tape recorder in hand, we talked to a female dean of a law school, an Afro-American poet, a Japanese architect, a Chicano artist, and a New York businesswoman” who were, respectively: Dorothy Nelson (a Bahá’í and Dean of the Law School at the University of Southern California); Robert Hayden (a Bahá’í and professor of English at the University

of Michigan who would be named the following year as the first African American Poet Laureate of the U.S.); Shinji Yamamoto (a Bahá'í, the state architect of Wisconsin, and a former captive of the Japanese internment camps); David V. Villasenor (a Bahá'í artist of Indian and Spanish ancestry), and; Mildred Mottahdeh (a Bahá'í and broker of Persian handicrafts). Many discussed issues of social inequality and race, such as Nelson's comment about:

. . . the extreme racism in America, even in the Western part of the United States where we supposedly didn't have such prejudices . . . I began to notice as I came into society as a high school student that none of the black students ever came to junior proms and things of this nature or were even expected to come where the white students were having social affairs. I also noticed it in my own church, in the Episcopal church where I was raised; there were no black or brown people in our church. Once we had an exchange with an all black church, and we were to have square dances, but dances where we didn't have to touch hands with the black children because it wasn't considered healthful even to shake their hands if the person was black. This distressed me terribly and made me very angry and caused me to wonder what was developing in America. (Editors 1975, 40-41)

Such stories of personal awakenings to the realities of American racism were often combined with structural analysis of racism. Yet, another approach to race and prejudice simultaneously graced the pages of *World Order*. A focus on culture again appeared, but this time, through an ascendant hypothesis of the day—the “culture of poverty” thesis.

The Culture of Poverty

A. L. Lincoln's 1968 essay “A New Unionism” addressed some of the effects of racial prejudice and discrimination against Black and Brown urban poor, but then came to focus on what quickly became known as the “culture of poverty”:

Another major factor is the social and cultural aspect of poverty. In studies of different ethnic groups in several countries, Oscar Lewis found that there was a universal “culture of poverty” displayed by disadvantaged groups in capitalistic societies.” Education, communications media, and advertising indoctrinate the poor with the tastes of an affluent society and the norms of a society which judges a man by what he earns and what he owns. They are taught to value things they can never attain, and they are taught that only the unworthy fail. Everything the society tells them makes them feel shut out of the mainstream and cut off from all that is good in life, and it makes them believe it is all because of their own failings. Self-respect is quashed, and the natural result is hopelessness, suppressed anger and guilt, apathy, and the demoralization and degeneracy which reinforce all the other conditions of poverty and give it its prison-like quality. (Lincoln 1968, 20)

Lincoln was a Chicago community organizer who, having graduated from Harvard in 1967—as stated in the “Interchange” section of *World Order*—“is now living in a Chicago slum and attending the University of Chicago Law School. He tells us in a letter, ‘Most importantly, I was studying the Bahá’í Faith while working on this paper, enrolled shortly after completing it, and am now an active member of the Chicago Bahá’í Community’” (*World Order* 1968, 2-3).

Lewis’s “culture of poverty” thesis, then an *en vogue* academic concept, found resonance with Lincoln. First appearing in *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (1959), Lewis argued that the combined effects of years of poverty and racism had systemically imposed upon their recipients a host of negative values and worldviews, leading the racial underclass to reproduce within an autonomous culture (thus emphasizing the role of childhood socialization) that disallowed them social mobility as adults. This thesis was attractive and well-known, having reached greater public attention when Daniel Patrick Moynihan cited Lewis’s work in his 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (known colloquially as the “Moynihan Report”), in which he wrote that African Americans lived in a “culture of poverty” and

were caught in a “tangle of pathology [that] is capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world” (Moynihan 1965, 47). From this perspective, and in a word, Black and Brown culture was “broken.”

American Bahá'í periodical discourse was not inoculated from the influence of this concept. Even in addressing racial prejudice and racism explicitly, *World Order* articles often did not identify such toxins as prejudice and racism as a consequence of White social, economic, or political dominance. Rather, White people and White power were absolved of responsibility for the vulnerabilities that people of color faced. Rather than charge White people to address their individual prejudices on a micro-level, their meso-level behavioral discrimination in organizations or inter-personal interactions, or the macro-level effects of institutional racism to exclude or marginalize people of color from full and equal wages, property rights, social status, and political opportunities, the “culture of poverty” became a rhetorical tool to reframe racial inequality as the fault of historical actors long-gone that had now taken root inside the brains and culture of those in the racial underclass. Racial prejudice slowly became less a cause of racial inequality, animosity, or disunity. Such discourse was the weaponization of culture in defense of the White status quo. And with prejudice located in the proverbial bad values of the racial underclass, Bahá'í teachings became supercharged as both moral corrective and racial solution.

This approach was not only applied to Black and Brown people but to any non-White group. Native American people were not regularly discussed in American Bahá'í periodicals. And while the 1969 article entitled “The Cultural Encounter between Indian and White” by Mary Dahm contained little indication of the timbre of White paternalism

as manifested in prior Bahá'í periodicals articles about North American indigenous peoples [e.g., “The Future of the Indian Race” by Stanwood Cobb (1924) or “The Adaptable Indian” by Williard W. Beatty (1938)], it did explore the results of racial prejudice as an internalized self-hatred rather than a force directed at Native peoples by an out-group:

The Indian himself, after being told by the non-Indian world in words and action that he is unequal, accepts this definition of himself and begins to conform to the white man's expectations. He associates his own “Indianness” with shame rather than appreciation or pride Education and fundamental changes in prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior are necessary to bring about this end and to enable the Indian Canadian to enjoy his God given right. (Dahm 1969, 40)

It is important not to overstate the case as not all writers downplaying the role of White prejudice and discrimination as responsible for racial inequality employed the culture of poverty thesis. While the culture of poverty was sustained in many other articles in *World Order*, not directly pertaining to racial prejudice, the application of “culture” to prejudice began to shift. “Culture” became a significantly vague blanket, often associated with supposedly negative effects of mass media, technology, consumerism, and even identity that were thrown over the discussion of prejudice more generally. As early as 1968, Firuz Kazemzadeh’s article “Views on Education in a New World” framed not only the “culture” of the underclass as dysfunctional, but of society overall, whereby crass materialism and consumerism combined with racial prejudice to overshadow education and intimate feelings of hope, sympathy, and pain.

Symptoms of disease are everywhere. Within two months of each other two national figures have been assassinated. After the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King I watched a television newscaster gulp down tears. But commercials kept interrupting and millions of viewers were entertained with frivolous jingles promising sex appeal, one beautiful beer, and a variety of dog food. Not even respect for the dead could stop the bilge from flowing. (Kazenzadeh 1968, 16)

A 1970 article entitled “Harlem Prep: Homocultural Education for a New Era” argued a similar point. Authored by Edward Carpenter, a Bahá’í and the first headmaster of Harlem Preparatory School, Inc, the article set the stage for his arrival at the school, telling the reader that his goal was to:

. . . expedite the enrollment and instruction of students who presented diverse backgrounds. Harlem Prep has black, white, and racially mixed students, Five Percenters, Black Panthers, Garveyites, believers in the doctrines of Malcolm X, Castro, Che Gruevara, and Mao, political activists, fiery militants, and the politically neutral, as well as Bahá’í students. (Carpenter 1970, 41)

With such a diversity, Carpenter’s approach was complicated “because of the racial problem”, the very cause for the formation of Harlem Prep itself. He then described how racial prejudice had created a dysfunctional culture and childhood identity problem with Black students at the school, a “problem” to which he was immune simply because of his membership in the Bahá’í Faith.

It is heartrending to observe so many of our black students manifesting problems of racial identity. They become confused and angry attempting to define whether they are Negro, Afro-American, or Black. They seem to be asking, "Who am I?" As Headmaster, I have no simple answer. As a Bahá’í I attempt to ease their pain and still their fears by recalling the beautiful utterances revealed by Bahá'u'lláh As for me, I have no problem concerning my color, race, or background I have no time to become sidetracked or bogged down in self-destructive racial hate. My “thing” is love. (Carpenter 1970, 42)

But it was not only a Black culture of poverty, but an overall decadent and declining culture that was in crisis, akin to Kazenzadeh’s indictment of culture and media distraction: “But as educators, we must also be alert and aware of the plethora of sounds and jargon that bombards us from all media, the purpose of which is not the enhancement of man, but the stimulation of dormant secondary drives in order to impel us to purchase items of questionable value” (Carpenter 1970, 44).

By 1971, Gayle Morrison's article "Education for Worldmindedness" exemplified the intertwined focus on cultural "attitudes" and "pathological" prejudice as an orientation in the personalities of children was made explicit:

The problem of prejudice is even more complicated than that of inherent aggressiveness . . . prejudice may be either "normal" or "pathological." Normal prejudice is the adoption of derogatory attitudes within one's culture by a basically well-adjusted individual. Pathological prejudice is the displacement of "frustrations, self-contempt, and self-destructive dispositions onto convenient scapegoats." . . . Society not only determines generally held attitudes, but it also helps condition child-rearing practices which seem to be associated with the development of authoritarian or prejudiced personalities. (Morrison 1971, 37-38)

While American Bahá'í periodical discourse continued to bluntly identify the racism of American society and the ubiquity of racial prejudice throughout the 1970s, both the abstract appeal to culture and a placing of blame on People of Color's and immigrants' culture as an impediment to socio-economic equality, instead of racial prejudice, also bound together the pages of *World Order*. For instance, Hossain B. Danesh, an Iranian-born Bahá'í who became a psychiatrist and university professor, began his 1974 article "Universal Man and Prejudiced Man" with the following:

PREJUDICE is a universal phenomenon characterized by a preconceived, generalized opinion, either favorable or unfavorable. It is basically of an irrational and stereotyped nature and is a force of devastating power. Sociologists and psychologists have shown that prejudice is closely related both to personality structure and to cultural factors. The results of their studies are best understood if we review the two areas separately. (Danesh 1974, 16)

Drawing heavily from Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* as well as Theodore Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*, Danesh framed prejudice as either the result of broken individuals or broken culture. First, prejudice came from adult personalities marked by "Conventionality, rigidity, repression, and denial" who as children became

“highly prone to the formation of stereotypes and of in-group/out-group cleavages.”

Second, prejudice came from minority cultures’ inability to adapt to a dominant culture:

Studies of culture have uncovered a wide range of sociological factors which dearly appear to be involved in the development of prejudice. Among them the needs for adaptation and for conformity are perhaps the most prevalent and influential Recent studies of communities where the demands of cultural adaptation are especially heavy have shown that the effort to attain cultural norms has produced prejudice quite independently of any deep-lying personality trends. Indeed, some social scientists maintain that cultural demands are the main source of prejudice. (Danesh 1974, 17-18)

With half of the causes of prejudice laid at the feet of subordinate culture, when applied to race, the onus rested on changing People of Color’s culture due to their inability to “adapt”. This became both a pragmatic failure and a mark of evil, as Danesh summed-his article with a citation from Bahá’u’lláh:

In the final analysis it [prejudice] will yield only to a force capable of radically changing human consciousness That force, Baha’is believe, resides in the Revelation of God to our age. Baha’u’llah states that “. . . the task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish . . . The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far reaching a change.” (Danesh 1974, 25)

This form of theorizing was not without opposition. Reactions against the proposed causality of an uniquely racialized culture to explain either the lack of People of Color’s assimilation with White people or the larger hierarchy of racial inequality in the U.S. if not the world, was not always welcome. In this vein, Rhett S. Jones’s 1976 article “Maroon Identity in Jamaica: 1655-1738” jumps to the fore. For context, there was substantial growth of the Bahá’í Faith in Jamaica in the 1960s. Jamaican Bahá’ís formed a National Spiritual Assembly in 1961, just before the nation gained independence from the British Crown in 1962. It is possible that interest among the U.S. readers of *World Order* grew, as well as the fact that the Jamaican native Glenford Mitchell was one of the

co-editors of *World Order* in 1976 (alongside Firuz Kazemzadeh, Betty J. Fisher, Howard Garey, and Robert Hayden). Whatever the reason for the interest, Jones began his article by quoting from R.C. Dallas's *The History of the Maroons of Jamaica*:

. . . plunged in ignorance, and subject to all the wanton cruelties and miseries of savage tyranny . . . the colonists rescue these unfortunate blacks from a state of horrid and savage slavery, to place them in a mild and civilized state of servitude; they snatch them from the most degrading idolatry, and lead them to the benevolent system of the gospel of Christ.
(Jones 1976, 18 [italics in original])

Immediately following this quote, Jones began his riposte to the double-sided tale of White benevolent paternalism and a Maroon culture of poverty: "This account of the slave trade is untrue. It is given the lie by those who have been enslaved and who left behind the records of their thoughts and experiences" (Jones 1976, 18). After setting the record straight, Jones then made clear his thesis. Rather than engage in a "sociological history" leveled by outsiders with oppositional interests and agendas, he would instead "attempt to get at Maroon conceptions of themselves" (Jones 1976, 18). After situating this standpoint, Jones recounted how Maroon identity was neither a homogenous category nor reducible to categories like race or nation, but was an ongoing process of conscious navigation of variable categories of race, nation, and class:

. . . so a Maroon who asked himself "Who am I?" could not simply answer "I am a Jamaican" or "I am a black man," for there were too many types of Jamaicans and too many types of black men. Maroons then were forced into conscious reflection on their own identity, and these reflections were influenced by their perception of the Jamaican class system. (Jones 1976, 24).

In making the point, Jones subtly undermined the core assumption at the heart of the culture of poverty thesis. There was no single Blackness, and thus no one reified or stable Black "culture". These concepts were both highly variable and were not over-determinant. The very people who occupied these categories had agency to navigate

them and redeploy them as they say befitting their local exigencies. Then a professor of history and Afro-American studies at Brown University with a focus on race and prejudice in his scholarship, Jones made no mention of the Bahá'í Faith in his article, but used the pages of an American Bahá'í periodical to resist the reification, homogenization, and reduction of race required to animate the culture of poverty.

Jones' article either presaged or helped promote (or both) *World Order's* slow turn away from the culture of poverty thesis by the late 1970s. For instance, in the next volume in that same year (1976), both Hossain B. Danesh and William S. Hatcher took to task Arthur Jensen's 1973 article in *Psychology Today* entitled "Are Differences Real?" which argued that IQ differences between White and Black children are of a "racial, genetic origin" (Danesh and Hatcher 1976, 52). Pulling few punches, they wrote that Jensen's thesis was "mischievous" and that "[b]eneath the appearance of calm objectivity lurk tacit assumptions of a racist character" (Danesh and Hatcher 1976, 52). And in addressing Jensen's misuse of "culture", Danesh and Hatcher (1976, 54) wrote:

The multiplicity of cultural cues which the black child assimilates with every breath he takes—all telling him he is stupid and sometimes even rewarding him for acting so—cannot possibly be measured by any one-parameter system of measurement. In particular, one is certainly not going to neutralize this sort of massive education by such a trivial device as manipulating the race or color of testing person or by giving a test in ghetto dialect (see pp. 82-84). We find these examples of Jensen ludicrous in their oversimplification of cultural variables. Indeed, the world "cultural" is much too weak to carry the full weight of the educative process inflicted on blacks by whites.

While Danesh and Hatcher's article reflected both *World Order's* 1960s and '70s-era commitment to oppose racial essentialism and to identify the external and environmental sources such as discrimination and the unequal distribution of resources (rather than internally-essential inborn, genetic, or biological variables) of racial inequality, it also

mirrored the trouble that “culture” presented in the discursive construction of race and racial prejudice. That is, “culture” was particularly Janus-faced. It could be operationalized as an external or environmental force, akin to varied measures of socio-economic resources or even as language ability, foods and (mal)nutrition, or mass media messages and propaganda, while “culture” also functioned as an invasive ideology, infecting the brains of those exposed, settling-into the internal dispositions and personalities of the racial group most exposed and without the proper inoculation of material or other “cultural” resources.

Consequently, while Danesh and Hatcher opposed Jensen’s use of biology and culture to explain racial differences in IQ testing, they occasionally reproduced the same “cultural” constraints they sought to displace. Danesh and Hatcher occasionally overdetermined Blackness, repeating almost verbatim the language of the prior-mentioned “Moynihan Report.” For instance, they wrote casually of “the disastrous family structure of blacks [that] is well-known to social scientists” (Danesh and Hatcher 1976, 54) and of the “effect of the total deracination of the black by which he was reborn in a strange land as a chattel slave” (Danesh and Hatcher 1976, 54). At the time of their writing, there were heterogenous findings regarding the social outcomes of native-born versus immigrant Black people, which demonstrated the varied effects on the descendants of slaves, that Blackness could not be distilled to slavery, and that a host of variables continued to the racialization of people considered “Black” in the U.S. (cf. Bryce-Laporte 1972; Hershberg, et al. 1979; Higgs 1976; Lieberman 1973; Thompson 1972). Moreover, scholars had identified the select rendering of Black family life as “broken” or “dysfunctional” given that African Americans were more likely to be raised in single

parent homes than Whites yet, they had a much higher percentage of being raised in larger, closer, and extended households than Whites (cf. Aschenbrenner 1973; Billingsley 1968; Du Bois 1899, 1909; Ruggles 1994). With “culture” increasingly critiqued as a vague causal variable, as well as its association with victim-blaming, *World Order*’s construction of race turned to other concepts and foci.

Looking Backward and Forward on “The Most Challenging Issue”

Despite missteps, and perhaps to avoid them in the future, as the 1970s drew to a close, *World Order*’s construction of race and racial prejudice retreated from its use of the culture of poverty as well as pulled back from harsh indictments of those who used biological or genetic explanations for racial inequality. In their place, the discursive construction of race and racial prejudice staked out new ground far from the extreme causal renderings of racial inequality. That is, rather than debate the origins or roots of racism and racial inequality, authors began to engage in descriptive imaginings of the Bahá’í engagement of race in both the past and the future. Jacques Chouleur’s 1977 article “The Bahá’í Faith: World Religion of the Future?” is emblematic of this approach. Translated from an article in *Annales Universitaires d'Avignon* first published in November 1975, Chouleur’s article was a voyage through Bahá’í apologetics. For instance, before broaching race, Chouleur first attempted to defend the Bahá’í Faith’s stance between relative (social) and absolute (divine) religion in relation to the core principles of the “three onenesses” and “progressive revelation”:

To Bahá’ís, religion is One, because God is One, and mankind is One. To the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Zoroastrian, the Jew, or the Moslem, a Bahá’í does not say, “Your religion is false; ours is true; you must be converted!” He says, “Your religion is true, at least in its essence and original form, but it is now obsolete. It was valid only for a particular tribe, a particular

period in history, but today you must break down all barriers in order to achieve a global consciousness of the underlying unity. Your religion is true, but it is not the only true one. It expresses but a fragment of the truth, and this fragment is a truth only for a given era in the history of civilizations. Look beyond prejudices and borders! Look beyond the present hour! Come build with us the planetary religion, the religion of the whole human race, the religion for our day and the days to come.” The Bahá’í Faith invites us to broaden our religious horizons, not to become an apostate. (Chouleur 1977, 11)

With a future-facing ideology deployed in which the Bahá’í Faith was the religion for “the days to come”, Chouleur traveled back to the contemporary, interpolating an always-already utopian Bahá’í community of 1977 race relations. Such an imagined community lived between the prior-mentioned polarities of the culture of poverty and the criticism of racist theories of biological determinism. I quote at length from Chouler, but emphasize it is but a portion of his run-on discussion of the matter:

The Bahá’í community is, therefore, first, a multinational and multiracial community, and it is profoundly antiracist. In his day Bahá’u’lláh had proclaimed the complete equality and unconditional fraternity of all races. However, instead of expressing their antiracist convictions through inflammatory pamphlets, protest marches, solemn petitions, and other such bombastic procedures, Bahá’ís quietly do their best to live in multiracial groups. To learn how to live together, to overcome the racist impulses to which every human being is unfortunately prone, seems to them more courageous and more realistic than noisy denunciations of the racism of others. Indeed, one of the main Baha’i virtues precisely lies in the abstention from accusation, censorious judgments, or sarcastic remarks concerning one’s fellow man, whether he be a relative, the next-door neighbor, a colleague, a stranger in the street, or a politician on one’s TV screen. Of course, one can always regret or criticize other people’s doings, but this should be done only in moderation and in a civil and courteous way, and only in cases of absolute necessity, being mindful of the parable of the mote in your brother’s eye! To return to the subject of races, let us note that a typical Baha’i community is composed of persons who belong to various ethnic groups. In the United States, for instance, the community will include not only Caucasians—as white people of European stock are called there—and “WASPS,” but also Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Nisei Japanese, Chicanos, and so on, according to local conditions. (Chouler 1977, 14).

Chouler concluded with a citation of Bahá'u'lláh's words that humanity would become "the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch," and argued that such words embodied "a wish that no humanist from the inmost recesses of his heart, can possibly object to, even if he is an agnostic" (Chouler 1977, 18).

Such a tone, marked by the careful and moderate circumambulation around the issues of race and racial prejudice, rather than their head-on confrontation, came to mark *World Order's* engagement with race in the rest of the 1970s and into the 1980s. During this time, many cultural commentators, academics, and journalists proposed a "color-blind" approach to racial inequality. For example, social scientists were increasingly articulating the thesis that class and labor issues, rather than race, were the real determinants of social turbulence, as witnessed in the renowned sociologist William J. Wilson's book *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978). Conservative authors like Thomas Sowell, in his book *Ethnic America: A History* (1981), argued that high levels of racial consciousness and too much policy attention paid to race made for increased social conflict. Throughout the '70s and '80s from his perch on "Point/Counterpoint" on the news program *60 Minutes*, former segregationist James Kilpatrick would repeatedly argue that no race-conscious policies or laws should exist, but that all Americans should be treated equally without regard to race. President Ronald Reagan would repeatedly conflate remedial policies like affirmative action with illegal and unconstitutional racial quotas and repeatedly push for the reversal of school desegregation efforts with an appeal to race-neutral or color-blind policies: "We want a colorblind society," Reagan stated in 1986, "a society that, in the words of Dr. King, judges people 'not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character'" (Reagan 1986). "Racism" was increasingly

articulated as a problem largely solved by the Civil Rights movement. “In the 1980s, many Americans began to believe that racial problems and institutional discrimination were a thing of the past” (Messer-Kruse 2008, 1). Simply put, to move beyond racism, people should stop talking about and acting upon race.

This milieu left *World Order* between a rock and hard place. They could not disregard Scriptural imperatives on racial equality, the commandment to abolish racial prejudices, or even the use of “affirmative action”-like policies in Bahá’í elections, whereby if an equal number of ballots are cast for two people, the ethnic or racial minority person should be accorded priority. However, they could also not engage in political partisan ship or facilitate disunity of a lack of harmony between divergent interests. Such ambiguity and tension was expressed in the reclamation of a phrase first deployed by Shoghi Effendi in 1938: “racial prejudice . . . should be regarded as constituting the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá’í community at the present stage of its evolution” (1938, 28). *World Order* made the line “the most challenging issue” into a Bahá’í euphemism on racism, particularly racial inequality, discrimination, and hostility along the American color-line between White and Black people.

Consider the following 1979 editorial in *World Order* entitled “Long Hot Summers of Discontent” in which the editors explained their Shakespearean choice of title:

The thought of long hot summers conjures images of languid days and sultry nights, stretches of leisure time, gamboling, the cooling enchantments of rolling waters, the allure of exotic lands. But in the decade of-the sixties the term “long hot summer” came to connote a harsh reality: the heating up of racial conflicts that caused American cities to explode in violence. (Editors 1979, 2)

Then, after citing the Kerner Commission report of 1967, which famously remarked that the litany of race riots throughout the 1960s indicated that the U.S. was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate but unequal”, the editors wrote:

After ten years of relatively cool summers, what assessment can one make? While federal government aid to the cities has been greatly increased, the ghettos remain unchanged and grow worse. Although a large number of blacks have entered the middle class, unemployment among blacks as a whole has doubled. Even though the residential boundaries for blacks have expanded, American society continues to be mostly segregated . . . Blacks perceive more tolerance on the part of whites but have less hope. It would seem, then, that although the society has not exactly been standing still, it has been marking time. The deep issues of race relations in the United States remain largely unresolved. Such a disheartening assessment convinces Baha'is that what they have always claimed is still a fact: racial prejudice is *the most challenging issue* [my emphasis] confronting the American people. (Editors 1979, 2-3)

Two years later, in 1981, the editors of *World Order* penned another essay entitled “Racial Prejudice: Still the Most Challenging Issue” in which they described the difficulties of combatting racial prejudice. Quoting again the words of Shoghi Effendi, they highlighted how racial prejudice remained the American Bahá'í community's “most challenging issue.” However, they asserted that racism “is hard to evaluate” (Kazemzadeh, et al. 1981, 2) and questioned whether prejudice is “representative of a real social trend” or if it is symptomatic of “individual psychopathology” (Kazemzadeh, et al. 1981, 2). No answer was given. Instead, readers of *World Order* were charged with the responsibility to answer those questions through their own dedicated study.

To navigate the “most challenging issue” between the Scylla of an ascendant era of color-blindness and the Charybdis of race-conscious Bahá'í theology at the turn of the 1970s to '80s, *World Order* first looked backward to individual exemplars. Across 1979 and 1980, Gayle Morrison published three biographic essays on Louis Gregory, which together emphasized the herculean endeavors of Gregory as one of the first African

American Bahá'í practitioners in the time of Jim Crow (Morrison 1979a, 1979b, 1980). Beginning her first essay, Morrison wrote, “At the heart of the most challenging issue for the American Baha'i community—the problem of obliterating racial prejudice—stands Louis George Gregory” (Morrison 1979a, 21). That same year, Ernest D. Mason published “Alain Locke’s Social Philosophy” which was an attempt to place many of Locke’s philosophical articulations on race and “cultural pluralism” as a result of his membership in the Bahá'í Faith and as a reflection of Bahá'í theological teachings. Mason (1979, 26) thus wrote:

Insofar as Locke's cultural pluralism . . . it qualifies as a social philosophy *par excellence*. In his “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy” (1942) Locke voiced his desire to make cultural pluralism the social philosophy of democracy, adapted to America's cosmopolitan setting For Locke, cultural pluralism and cultural relativism both have their foundation in the Bahá'í principle of unity in diversity. In his essay “Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle” (1930) Locke points out that “This principle is basic in the Bahá'í teaching. It may lead us to another dangerous partisanship to assert it as exclusively Bahá'í; but there is no escaping the historical evidences of its early advocacy and its uncompromising adoption by the Bahá'í prophets and teachers.” Alain Locke was one such loyal Bahá'í who never wavered in his task of translating the principle of unity in diversity into every important domain of modern life and thought.

The Fall 1981 issue of *World Order* was largely a tribute to the recently deceased African American Bahá'í, Robert Hayden, who had previously served as a co-editor of *World Order*. Articles in this issue included “Words for Robert Hayden” a poem by Jacob Miller; “Robert Hayden: A Life Upon These Shores” by Pontheolla T. Williams (1981); “Toward the Silence” a poem by Donna Denize (1981); “The Bahá'í Muse: Religion in Robert Hayden's Poetry” by Gerald Parks (1981), and; “In Memoriam: In Gratitude for Robert Hayden” by Julius Lester (1981). Most did not address race, but writing in “Robert Hayden: A Life Upon These Shores”, Williams began by evoking

race: “Robert Hayden’s mother, Gladys Finn, was born of racially mixed ancestry” (Williams 1981, 11). Williams returned to racial themes throughout the essay, and often framed Hayden as able to navigate bigotry, discrimination, and structural racism with a “warm humanistic worldview” due both to his interracial genealogy, his interracial friendship, and his Bahá’í beliefs.

In response to a question on racial prejudice in his neighborhood, Hayden said that, instead of bigotry, there was a feeling of victimization. Some landlords refused to repair the houses of their tenants, for example; but neglect was not universal. Jews and Italians did extend credit to his family. He had white playmates . . . later Hayden was to recall that his own parents cautioned him against “running around with so and so,” reminding him that he was “colored.” He said that when he reached puberty whites warned him, “You’re colored, and I don’t want you playing with my girls.” Perhaps, however, it was the memory of the crucially important services Jews and Italians extended to his family and his pleasant memories of his playmates on which he based his claim that his childhood was relatively free from hard prejudices. The insight and compassion gained from his own interracial experiences and mixed ancestry imbued him with a warm humanistic world view that became a significant asset in his art. (Williams 1981, 14-15).

While some attention was paid to race, Williams also emphasized both a color-blind approach to Hayden alongside Hayden’s own supposedly color-blind attitude: “His high school experiences helped lay the foundation for his later rejection of black literary iconoclasm, his acceptance of craftsmanship and artistic freedom, and his wish, in his own words, for ‘acceptance as a writer, not as [a writer] with a particular racial identity’” (Williams 1981, 15).

Such biographical reclamations of African American Bahá’ís who both resisted the racism of the past and triumphed over it through appeals to color-blindness, cultural pluralism, or who eschewed an emphasis on their “racial identity” functioned to address the “most challenging issue” through a sanitized past, whether more distant or recent in memory. This approach also found expression in renderings of systemic racial

inequality. For example, in the 1983 essay “The Poor In America: A Visionary Statement”, June Thomas took to task the “ill-conceived ‘culture of poverty’” (1983, 44) as the product of “cultural anthropologists” who possessed “more in-depth intimate observations than could studies by social scientists armed only with census data and survey questionnaires” (1983, 45), but then framed racial discrimination as an artifact of the past with appeal to sociology:

William Julius Wilson, a black sociologist, argues that the problem for lower-class blacks is no longer a matter of simple racial oppression by whites. Middle-class blacks have been able to make rapid advances upward, partly because of antidiscriminatory legislation. But the patterns of *past* [emphasis in original] racial discrimination have created a large black underclass that has not been benefited from policies such as affirmative action. Wilson suggests that the technological and economic revolution of the contemporary United States has combined with the effects of discrimination to create a virtually permanent state of poverty for the black underclass. (Thomas 1983, 51)

Alongside these articulations, the third way of moderate discursive constructions of racial matters also found expression in the inevitability of anti-racist and racial equal futures.

Importantly, despite the ambiguity and tension in the 1980s discursive construction of race, there emerged a marked departure from prior Bahá’í’s periodical articulations of soteriology and millennialism; the future world in which a “most great peace” would have eliminated all major social conflicts under the umbrella of a global Bahá’í theocratic government. Whereas in previous years American Bahá’í periodical discourse anointed belief in Bahá’u’lláh and obedience to His teachings (known colloquially in Bahá’í circles as the “twin duties”) as the socio-spiritual prerequisites to solving the “race problem”, the early 1980s described the definitive unravelling of the entangled problems of racial inequality, discrimination, and racism as themselves necessary stages, even preconditions, of the prophesied Bahá’í utopia.

For instance, in 1982, Nosratollah Rassekh published an article entitled “Some Reflections on Racial Unity: Review of *To Move the World*”. Largely culled from the prior articles published by Gayle Morrison in *World Order*, *To Move the World* was a 1982 publication about Louis Gregory, whom Morrison called “the most outstanding black Bahá’í in America in the first half of the 20th century.” In his review, instead of reiterating the point of his prior-mentioned 1975 essay (“Melting Pot or Boiling Cauldron: The Ethnic Experience in America”) in which a Bahá’í-inspired, socio-spiritual “Order is required” as a precondition to the abolition of racial prejudice, Rassekh now reversed the criteria. He instead claimed that racial prejudice “had to be resolved before there could be world peace and world order”:

Both ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and later His grandson Shoghi Effendi considered race prejudice as America’s most vital problem and its most challenging issue. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that the tranquility of the whole world depended on the coming together of the whites and the blacks; Shoghi Effendi linked racial unity in America to the cause of world peace and considered the development of the Bahá’í Faith among black Americans as a part of a general spiritual “upsurge” of the nonwhite peoples of the world prerequisite to the establishment of the new World Order (pp. 267, 311). “The most challenging issue” could not, naturally, be resolved easily, but it had to be resolved before there could be world peace and world order. (Rassekh 1982, 46)

While this represented a sea-change in emphasis on the “most challenging issue” and the future Bahá’ís “world order”, clarity on the details of their causal relationship went without specific clarification.

To resolve this ambiguity, *World Order* increasingly framed the two variables as entwined in a co-constitutive relationship. Racial equality and the Most Great Peace were the cause and effect of one another, and would not be achieved in a temporal linear order, but through simultaneous commitment to each. For example, in the 1985 article “Social and Economic Development Toward World Peace” Anne Rowley Breneman

presented a case study of race relation and Bahá'í community growth in Dudley County, Ohio in which there were, “(a) individuals wondering how the Bahá'í Faith can influence entrenched patterns of prejudice and conflict in social situations, and (b) Bahá'í communities wondering about the spiritual prerequisites of social and economic development and how to begin” (1985, 24). With simultaneous focus on Bahá'ís teachings dislodging racial prejudice and identifying the conditions of social change, Breneman explicitly covered many of the difficulties impeding the realization of a racial equal social order and of the psycho-social and symbolically interactive repercussions of racial inequality and segregation:

As a result of the fears and prejudices, a peculiar pathology can be discerned in all human relationships in the county, particularly cross-racial ones. Individuals are often forced into one of several extremes, depending on their personalities and racial affiliations. Blacks may avoid, as much as possible, contact with whites so that they can preserve a measure of self-esteem and dignity; however, when in the company of whites, they maintain a formal aloofness as a defense measure. Others struggle with overwhelming feelings of self-hatred, often accompanied by secret feelings of white envy and a tendency toward what has been termed “Uncle Tom” behavior in the presence of whites. Whites, however, may either accept the myth of white superiority and black inferiority or become what are despised by whites-“nigger lovers.” (Breneman 1985, 28)

As a remedy, Breneman outlined a dual process of practicing the principles of racial equality and integration alongside the implementation and learning of Bahá'í principles:

Through friendship, study of the Bahá'í teachings, visits to black and white churches, children's classes, conferences and social gatherings, service projects, and newspaper articles and ads covering Baha'i events and teachings Dudley County began to notice the presence of a new standard in its midst. Meanwhile, Dudley County Bahá'ís began to gain some experience in consultation and planning A new concept of world citizenship began to emerge in the consciousness of people whose social worlds had included very few persons outside of kin and church groups within the county, but who now welcomed Thais, Filipinos, Iranians, Nigerians, and Asian Indians into their homes for the first time and heard new expressions of diversity As the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh spread throughout Dudley County, attracting the first white woman in 1978 and

the attention of all, the spiritual assemblies began to grow in strength. (Breneman 1985, 30)

Far from individual and micro-level “color-blind” relationships, but without focused attention on addressing macro-level, systemic racial inequalities, the approach of meso-level community organizing in which integrated meetings and interracial friendships were anointed as both goal and process toward the simultaneous goal of Bahá’í growth and influence in the community life of Dudley County. Breneman thus concluded, that the abolition of racial prejudice was increasingly articulated as both functional aim and abstract ideal in support of, and birthed by, the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh:

The Bahá’í concept of development should be viewed as a fundamental change in the ordering of human relations “The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His [Baha'u'llah's] Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth.” (Breneman 1985, 37)

That same year, the editors of *World Order* (then Firuz Kazemzadeh, Betty J. Fisher, Howard Garey and James D. Stokes) penned “Breaking the Bonds of Racism”. Taking a moderate approach that both refused a color-blind dismissal of racism and yet narrowly-defining “racism” as only extremist behaviors from hateful people, or the the discourse of unhinged pseudo-science, the editors derided the insufficiency of both secular laws and policies to address racism. They thus regulated “the most challenging issue” to the apolitical domain of individual moral consciousness:

Racism is not dead in America. Its noxious fumes still poison the air. It marches down our street in columns of white-robed men. It blossoms in the profusion of confederate flags in our stadiums. It shouts its hate-filled slogans on college campuses. It hides under the mask of objective research and insinuates itself into scholarly publications. It influences public opinion and shapes policy. After two decades of progress there is a recession. Of those who fought for civil rights in the past, some have died;

other have tired of the struggle, made their compromises, or found new causes to pursue. But legally established rights-civil, political, or economic-are not enough. Charters and constitutions, ordinances and laws must be supported, implemented, and enforced by the conscious moral will of the people. Today that will flags. Aware of the ravages of racism, the Baha'is see in it a spiritual disease, a sickness of the soul, an infection of the mind, a distortion of the spirit. The struggle against racism must, therefore, first and foremost, be waged within the heart. Once the inner conviction of the unity of mankind has been reached and accepted as a religious principle, men and women can dedicate themselves to the elimination of prejudice in all its multifarious manifestations. (Kazemzadeh, et al. 1985, 2)

While American Bahá'í periodical discourse was ostensibly trying to thread the needle on race in the color-blind era of the 1980s, they repeatedly found appeal to the individual and the psychological as the key for eliminating racial prejudice. This framing illuminates a significant two-part ideological bias in the discursive construction of the “most challenging issue”. First, the systemic remediation of racial inequality and racism was thought accomplished. The necessary “charters and constitutions, ordinances and laws” were in place. Second, and in piggybacking off the former, the linchpin in the future attainment of racial harmony was not more or different laws or attention to systemic or structural issues, but was a matter of the “conscious moral will of the people.” In the end, the problem was constructed as one of psychology, ignorance, and bias. Just as easily, however, could those issues have been framed as the result of insufficient or erroneous social structures. But this was not a thesis to be raised in *World Order* in the 1980s.

This refusal to wed structural approaches to racial inequality is perhaps most striking in Roger S. Clark's essay “Preventing and Combating Intolerance of Religion or Belief.” Clark's essay was an edited version of a paper prepared at the request of the U.N. Secretariat for the U.N. seminar on the “Encouragement of Understanding,

Tolerance, and Respect in Matters Relating to Religion and Belief, held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 1984. As necessitated by the paper's impetus, the focus is global, macro, and institutional. While the necessity of creating stronger and more robust laws to protect "human rights" received consistent advocacy in the paper, the question of "race", and especially "racial discrimination", seemed to present a stumbling block whereby the moral commitment to antiracism was eclipsed by "practical arguments":

Those who did not support a change in the law made various practical arguments: the difficulty of determining who was affected by the statements in question; the danger that the courts would become forums for interracial and interreligious feuding; and waste of the courts' time in lengthy litigation. (Clark 1985, 37).

Perhaps fittingly, and coming full circle, recall that *World Order's* reboot turned early to Glenford Mitchell's 1966 review of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Now two decades removed in 1986, Mitchell reviewed the book again, but this time with a new take and title, "Awakening to Universal Manhood: A Review of The Autobiography of Malcolm X." While the prior version focused on the condemnation of racism and the seriousness of its effects on the retardation of both material and spiritual development of humanity, the second version was more optimistic and upbeat. In calling attention to the first review in 1966, the editors included an italicized preface that sets the tone:

In 1966, while noting that The Autobiography of Malcolm X had, by virtue of our prejudiced society, not appeared on the best-seller list, we predicted it would become a sociological classic. By the mid-1970s it was being referred to as "one of the most widely read and influential books in contemporary American literature." It is at once an indictment of racism—a major barrier to peace—and the triumph of one man's odyssey from the corruption and blight of a baneful and persistent evil to the acceptance of the oneness of God and the oneness of humankind. (Mitchell 1986, 89)

After reiterating Malcolm's rise and fall within the Nation of Islam, Mitchell concentrated on his conversation to orthodox Sunni Islam, with a telling quotation and emphasis on color-blindness:

With the assistance of an orthodox Muslim scholar in New York, Malcolm decided to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, during which he experienced another radical transformation in the pattern of his life, As he himself explained: "The *color-blindness* of the Muslim world's religious society and the *color-blindness* [italics in original] of the Muslim world's human society: these two influences had each day been making a greater impact, and an increasing persuasion against my previous way of thinking I had been blessed by Allah with a new insight into the true religion of Islam, and a better understanding of America's entire racial dilemma." (Mitchell 1986, 92)

The discursive focus on Malcolm's supposed "color-blind" embrace of religion alongside Mitchell's strange omission of *Autobiography's* simultaneous focus on Malcolm's founding of the "Organization of Afro-American Unity" which was explicitly modeled on Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanist plan for Black liberation and self-determination, certainly gestures toward a selective bias in the re-presentation of Malcolm's life. His life, through review of the *Autobiography*, is marshalled as a testament to structural and organizational color-blindness while his individual transformation from interracial "hate" to "love", labors to present a non-Bahá'í example of the Bahá'í approach to the "most challenging issue" as articulated by the likes of Breneman, Kazemzadeh, et al., Clark and others that go unmentioned for brevity's sake.

As the 1980s wore to a close, so did *World Order* yet again. Perhaps with the centennial of the 1892 passing of Bahá'u'lláh approaching and with a Bahá'í World Congress to be held in 1992 in New York City, the financial burdens of the periodical either proved too much or a different focus was thought needed. Whatever the case, neither the penultimate issue of *World Order* (a combined issue 3 and 4 in volume 23)

nor the final issue (a combined issue 1 and 2 for volume 24) in 1989 contain any clues. What they do hold is the final word on “race” until *World Order* returned in 1993. In “The Process of Social Change”, Brian Aull included an anecdote that was anything but color-blind, while also appealing to moderation responses to social inequalities without compromise to Bahá’í antiracist principles. In addressing the development of the Bahá’í Faith under apartheid rule in South Africa, Aull recounted:

At one point it became illegal in South Africa for Bahá’í spiritual assemblies to be racially integrated. In response the white Bahá’ís voluntarily gave up membership on the spiritual assemblies but pledged to abide by the authority of assemblies consisting only of blacks, Paradoxically, this act of obedience to the government made a morally compelling statement against white supremacy without confronting civil authorities in a hostile way. It demonstrated the validity of a moral principle as something that transcends partisan political loyalties and presented a unique appeal for change on the broadest humanitarian grounds. (Aull 1989, 17)

Summation

World Order’s second reiteration in 1966 first constructed race and racial prejudice as existing simultaneously in the domains of hierarchical social structures, the unfair stratification of resources, biased policies, laws, and people on the one hand, and on the other hand, as a set of cultural practices and beliefs that led to dysfunctional and pathological behaviors on the part of many non-White groups. As color-blind sentiment gained ascendance in the late ‘70s and into the 1980s, American Bahá’í discourse in *World Order* presented an uneasy navigation of those currents. Authors and editors evidenced both uncritical echos of the zeitgeist that tended to minimize the significance of racism, while also they appealed to both historical renderings of heinous acts of racism and future imaginations of a racial utopia in the United States.

Chapter X.

Individualism v. Structuralism and *Brown v. Board* (1993-2007)

Just as with the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and '60s, the absence of *World Order* in the early 1990s coincided with increased racial consciousness and conflict in the U.S. The issue of race-based “affirmative action” in college admission gained national attention in the early 1990s (Whitaker 1991, 29); in 1994 O. J. Simpson was accused of a double homicide while in 1995 the courtroom finale of his trial was broadcast nationwide, complete with split-screen views of Black and White audiences vastly different reactions to the verdict (Hunt 1999). Also in 1995, Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam held the “Million Man March” on the National Mall in Washington D.C. (cf. Hughey 2009b). In attempting to make sense of the time, social scientists argued that the U.S. was “hyper-segregated” (Massey and Denton 1993) and portrayed the U.S. as racially “polarized” (Tuch and Martin 1997). As Jennifer Fuller (2006, 167, 169) wrote:

In the 1990s, fears of racial fracture and desires for racial reconciliation converged Clearly the nineties was not the first era in which people feared the nation was somehow “falling apart.” . . . The rediscovery of racism and a racial divide between blacks and whites threatened America’s new sense of itself as a successfully integrated nation.

In the midst of these events in the fall 1993, *World Order* returned with Volume 25, Number 1 as a “commemorative issue” of the centennial of the passing of Bahá’u’lláh in 1892. While *World Order* was on hiatus from 1989 to 1993, the NSA of the Bahá’ís of

the United States published in 1991 the *Vision of Race Unity: America's Most Challenging Issue*, which began:

Racism is the most challenging issue confronting America. A nation whose ancestry includes every people on earth, whose motto is *E pluribus unum*, whose ideals of freedom under law have inspired millions throughout the world, cannot continue to harbor prejudice against any racial or ethnic group without betraying itself. Racism is an affront to human dignity, a cause of hatred and division, a disease that devastates society. (National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís of the United States 1991, 1)

Their statement was directed “primarily to the individual American, because the transformation of a whole nation ultimately depends on the initiative and change of character of the individuals who compose it” (National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís of the United States 1991, 1).

A Tale of Two Forces: Individual Heroes and Structural Racism

Perhaps inspired to take stock of the development of the Bahá'í Faith since the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, and with the individual subject anointed in the 1980s as the primary driver of social change, there was a continuation of the prior focus on individual agency, but historically-grounded in romantic tales of heroic individuals to upend racial prejudice. The 1980s had done well to cement the individual, along with a color-blind focus, to issues of race and racial equality. While the color-blindness would narrow and even recede by the mid-2000s, the attention to combatting individual-level prejudice and to individual, antiracist heroes of American Bahá'í history would continue in *World Order*.

For instance, beginning her essay with the statement that “The role of African American women in the early days of the Bahá'í Faith in the United States and Canada is

neither well documented nor widely known,” Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1993, 41) gave readers a 16-page review of several Black women Bahá’ís who had married civil rights activism to their faith in Bahá’u’lláh. For Etter-Lewis, as well as for the authors of other such articles in the ‘90s, she was reflexively conscious over the risks an article on Black women Bahá’ís might be perceived. Hence, she explicitly named her wish to avoid the interpretation of her article as either “tokenism” or the promotion of “egocentric attitudes”, but as rather a correcting of the historical record on the service:

Recovering information about early African American Baha'i women is important beyond narrowly historical concerns and should not be regarded as an exercise in tokenism, for knowing the past gives us an “angle of vision” that shapes and informs both the present and the future . . . all members of a group suffer when there is a lack of “historic memory” or when such memory is replaced by egocentric attitudes. It is, therefore, essential that Baha'is, as a people, develop and preserve their “historic memory” so that future generations of Baha'is will fully comprehend the significance of their cultural identity and/or peoplehood. We may begin the process by acknowledging and appreciating the central role of African American women in promulgating the Baha'i Faith throughout the world from its early beginnings to the present. (Etter-Lewis 1993, 41)

Articles on the historical development of the Bahá’í Faith continued to focus on individuals even in treatises that ostensibly were about the larger, organizational and ideological shifts of the young religion. For instance, the next year in 1994, Robert H. Stockman, a co-editor of the journal, a Th.D. graduate of Harvard Divinity School, and the Director of the Research Office at the Bahá’í National Center, penned both “Women in the American Bahá’í Community, 1900-1912” and “The Bahá’í Faith in America: One Hundred Years.” While neither concentrated on race, within the latter, the only mention of race centered on four African American individuals:

The greatest impact of the American Bahá’ís community has been in the field of race relations. Among the recognized public advocates of civil rights are three Bahá’ís: Alain Locke, Robert Abbott, and Nina Gomer DuBois [sic], the wife of W. E. B. DuBois [sic]. Louis G. Gregory, an

early African-American Bahá'í who was posthumously named a Hand of the Cause of God, was in touch with nearly every prominent African-American between the years 1910 and 1940 and influenced the thinking of some of them. (Stockman 1994, 22)

Having left-off in 1940, and just one line later, Stockman jumped to the 1990s to conclude: "In 1991 a public statement written by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, *The Vision of Race Unity: America's Most Challenging Issue*, focused on America's race problems and relevant Bahá'í principles" (Stockman 1994, 23).

In 1997, *World Order's* commitment to the Bahá'í periodical reclamation of racial dynamics and figures feared either lost to history or violently reduced within Bahá'í collective memory was made explicit in African American Bahá'í and psychology professor Michael Penn's essay "The Journey Out of the Racial Divide." Writing of the importance of studying the interplay of race and religion in history, Penn wrote emphatically: "THE FIRST step in the journey out of racism is to look back in history to locate and understand its origins" (Penn 1997, 7). After covering the many debates over racial types and racial equality in antiquity, the Enlightenment, and throughout two centuries of U.S. development, Penn then enumerated six historical factors that continued to exacerbate the "racial divide" through their contribution to "a weakening of faith in humanity and a consequent paralysis of the collective will" (Penn 1997, 11):

First, because America's national psyche was developed on the foundation of biological racism, this ideology permeates and clouds the nation's vision. Second, many who confuse unity with uniformity fear the loss of cultural pluralism. Third, it is difficult to forgive the historical and on-going injustices perpetrated by cultural or racial groups against one another. Fourth, many contemporary leaders derive their status from maintaining a spirit of race and class-based contention and divisiveness. Fifth, long-term, institutionalized injustices continue to create economic disparities that keep races, cultures, and nations in a constant state of conflict. And, last, much of humanity lacks the spiritual vision, moral

discipline, or social maturity necessary to contribute to the creation of harmonious relationships. (Penn 1997, 11)

With specific historical detail coupled to rigorous social scientific application and verification, Penn specified how and why American racial prejudice and segregation proved so intransigent. Despite the specificity of his thesis, Penn's appeal to focus on the historical roots of these factors in order to displace them in the present, was an outlier in the larger discussion of race in *World Order*.

Instead, a focus on heroic individuals continued into new millennium, but with new emphasis on the corollaries and co-constitutive impacts of racial and gender prejudice, perhaps influenced by the academic work on "intersectionality" which was finding resonance in the public sphere. Such publications included, "Turning Point: Women of African Descent and Writing in the Twentieth Century" (Etter-Lewis 2000) and "Radical Black Feminism and the Bahá'í Faith: Moments of Connection, Models of Change" (Maynerick 2004). Moreover, several articles on Robert Hayden appeared in 2005 and numerous articles over 2005 and 2006 discussed Alain Leroy Locke's synthesis of Bahá'í theology and race theory, including the republication of, or references to, several of his essays (e.g. Locke 1933, 1928, 1924).

There was pendulum like character to the topics and modes of inquiry in the *World Order* issues of the 1990s; they swung first to the historical overviews of (overwhelmingly African American) individual heroes and heroines of the Bahá'í Faith. But in beginning to balance this momentum, and even overtake it, articles covering a wide range of sundry topics related to larger macro-level dynamics of race and racism began to appear. Articles on global initiatives against racism, the epidemic of Black church burnings, and critiques of racial essentialism and biological determinism appeared

with greater frequency the 1990s and into the new millennium. By the mid-2000s, the historical focus on individuals of the past was matched by varied articles on institutional forces, social movements, ideological currents, and otherwise “structural” dynamics related to race and racism. The construction of race and racial prejudice in *World Order* during this time, made for a forked and bifurcated reading experience.

The trend toward structure was first presaged in a 1994 editorial entitled “The Equality of the Races”:

Today, as a hundred years ago, the Bahá'í community continues to struggle against the evil heritage of slavery and oppression of minorities that still bedevils this country. Bahá'ís participate or take the lead in various endeavors to bring about conciliation among African Americans, whites, native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, indeed all who have tasted the bitterness of discrimination. This year the Bahá'ís coordinated the activities of nongovernmental organizations that successfully worked for the ratification by the United States Senate of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. (Editors 1994, 2)

Lending weight to this editorial and immediately following it, an African American Bahá'í, author of *Models of Unity: Racial, Ethnic and Religious* (1991), and then-current secretary of the NSA, Robert C. Henderson published “Supporting an International Convention to Eliminate Racial Discrimination.” In the article, first composed as a statement given before the U.S. Senate, Henderson neither drew attention to individual initiatives nor highlighted the importance of fighting one’s own personal prejudices, but instead unequivocally emphasized structural solutions:

Only two years ago we watched in horror the violence and fires in Los Angeles. America's peace, prosperity, and even her standing in the international community largely depend on healing the wounds of racism and building a society in which all people, irrespective of color, ethnicity, national origin, or religion live as members of one family. Long-term solutions to ethnic and racial conflicts require a comprehensive vision of a global society, supported by international law, which should not be viewed as a constraint on the nation-state or a threat to its sovereignty, but as a

foundation for the next phase of the world's political development.
(Henderson 1994, 7)

The focus on structural racial dynamics continued in a 1996 editorial on the then publicized spate of African American church burnings in the U.S. In “Church Burnings: The Ugly Agony of Dying Order”, the editors of *World Order* first highlighted the central role the Black church, as an institution across varied locales, played in the quest for racial equality:

Ever since the days of slavery black churches have been more than houses of worship. An oppressed people made them centers of its community life; a refuge from the indignities, the horrors, and the humiliations faced daily in a hostile world dominated by brute force, a school of endurance and survival. More recently black churches served as centers of the civil rights movement, providing some of its most outstanding leaders and endowing it with the spirit of nonviolence. (Editors 1996, 1)

After covering the varied arsons of Black churches in the south as an “ugly manifestation of ingrained racism” and not as individual acts of hate but as evidence of “continuing oppression” (1996, 1) the editors drew a comparison between the resurgence of the systemic persecution of Iranian Bahá’ís and the burning of Southern U.S. Black churches, both as “terrorism” even as they placed such terrorism within a historical trajectory of the inevitable slow death of racism:

Although for the moment the forces of separatism, bigotry, and fanaticism seem to be on the ascendent [sic], their successes are an illusion. The world is inexorably moving toward its destiny of unity and peace. The burning of black churches in the American South, like the executions of innocent Bahá’ís in Iran and other acts of terrorism, is the ugly agony of a dying order. (Editors 1996, 1)

By 2000, *World Order*’s focus on systemic racism generated an editorial entitled “Racism—Are We Ready to Answer the Question?” Using Bahá’í utopian millennialism as point of departure, the editors took to task naïve faith in antiracist futures as preordained without human labor or solving problems of process and timelines. That is,

even if racial equality was promised in Bahá'í Scripture, how and when that would occur were open questions they felt many American Bahá'ís “ignored.” With scare quotes denoting their skepticism of an erring knowledge of an antiracist utopia, they wrote:

We might “know” that humanity will one day overcome the barriers that divide us, the tendencies that often pit us against each other. But the overriding question remains: How do we get to the desired outcome? What, indeed, does the outcome look like? We may congratulate ourselves for celebrating a few social and ceremonial occasions together, but there are serious issues that we continue to ignore. (Editors 2000, 2)

The editors then deployed a novel structural understanding of racism not as a fleeting thought, form of ignorance, or a psychological bias, but as a semi-autonomous “resource” able to reproduce itself when it lacked opposition. The editors then oriented that framing in the direction of White readers by quoting from Shoghi Effendi’s statement that “the white race” often exercises a “subconscious sense of superiority” (1938), before they also identified White paternalism and White guilt as systemic factors retard human unity:

Racism, it turns out, is a subtle and renewable “resource,” requiring that we be ever vigilant in the struggle against it. Many people seem to find it difficult to welcome those who are different, whether that difference is racial, cultural, gender- or age-based, or, as is frequently the case, economic-or some combination of these. Even when we take it upon ourselves to include the other, our act of inclusion is often ringed with what Shoghi Effendi termed a “usually inherent and at times subconscious sense of superiority.” Matters are aggravated when the attempted inclusion is combined with “impatience of any lack of responsiveness” from the supposed beneficiaries of our act of inclusion, beneficiaries who may have already moved on and left us our and who see in our new-found but belated enlightenment an attempt to soothe our guilty conscience rather than a genuine attempt to transcend differences and form a lasting partnership in which humanity can truly be said to be “one soul in many bodies.” (Editors 2000, 2)

The editors then threw down the gauntlet at American Bahá'ís to address the “large” and structural problems of racism: “there are no easy answers to the intractable problem of

racism, only difficult beginnings. It is sometimes comfortable to talk about ‘large’ issues because they are out of our control” (Editors 2000, 2).

Many essays throughout the 2000s took up the “large” and “intractable problem of racism”, such as Richard Thomas’ “Interracial and Multiracial Unity Movements in the U.S.: Models for World Peace” (2001), Arash Abizadeh’s “Ethnicity, Race, and a Possible Humanity” (2001), David Diehl and Elizabeth Ansel Kirsch’s “Children and Racism: The Complexities of Culture and Cognition” (2001), June Manning Thomas’s “Racism and the Planning of Urban Spaces” (2002), and Charles V. Carnegie’s “Models and Enactments of Transformation: A Response” (2004).

While many of these issues debated how to address structural racism, few interrogated “race” itself. This was already a topic of concern put into wide relief during the late 1990s “Initiative on Race” called for by President Bill Clinton. The presidential commission had elicited numerous responses and debate regarding its intent and focus. One such comment was made by Jefferson Fish, a psychologist at St. John’s University in New York, who stated: “This dialogue on race is driving me up the wall. Nobody is asking the question, ‘What is race?’” (in Petit 1998, A1). This would soon change with the 2000 success of the mapping of the human genome, which provided no genetic or genomic evidence for racial realities. In that vein, *World Order* published “Race: Neither Biological Fact nor Social Fiction” in 2001. Written by Algernon Austin, an African American Bahá’í, and then a faculty member at Wesleyan University who would go on to become the founding director of the Economic Policy Institute’s “Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy”, the essay went to great lengths to tease out that race was little more than an ideology that becomes real within the context of social interactions:

Race can be understood as a fallacious ideology of essential differences. Because race “begins” and thrives in false beliefs, that does not mean that race is not real. Race is real because the belief in race affects human behavior. Race, therefore, has genuine consequences throughout society. Race is not a fact of biology nor a social fiction. (Austin 2001, 18)

In what could be categorized as a solid “social constructionist” definition of race, this would be the last attempt to demarcate the “race” concept in *World Order*. The last major push toward interrogating racial inequality and prejudice overall came in 2004 with discussion of the 1954 desegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

In the Wake of *Brown v. Board*

In 2004, *World Order* emphasized the half-century mark since the watershed legal case of *Brown v. Board* overturned the Jim Crow system of racial segregation put in place in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. *World Order* dedicated an entire issue (Volume 36, Number 1) toward analyzing the 50 years since desegregation. The issue began with an editorial in which they both celebrated yet problematized the ways in which *Brown v. Board* had been critiqued. Without irony, the editors (then Betty J. Fisher, Arash Abizadeh, Monireh Kazemzadeh, Diane Lotfi, Kevin A. Morrison, Robert H. Stockman, and Jim Stokes) took a bold if not risky stance in denouncing one of the dominant scholarly critiques, voiced primarily by Black academicians, of *Brown v. Board*. That criticism largely hinged on the evaluation that the *Brown v. Board* decision marginalized the pursuit of racial equality while placing too much emphasis on integration and assimilation into White institutions at the expense of Black community and institution life. Summing up their stance, the editors cursorily stated that perhaps such critics “expect too much from one decision”:

In spite of its clear affirmation of the legal rights of all American citizens to education, and its laudable sentiments, *Brown* has not been without its detractors. Some critics of the *Brown* decision—including many prominent black scholars disappointed at the ruling's failure to address many of the problems still facing black school children, have suggested that *Brown* was wrongly decided and have argued that the better course would have been to insist on actual compliance with the “equal” part of *Plessy*’s separate-but-equal doctrine. They point to the problems that face desegregated schools today: inadequate funding for inner-city schools, white flight from city centers, busing, the loss of qualified black school teachers, and more. But this argument has two shortcomings. First, the social and political role of the American educational system at its best is not simply to teach children math and science and grammar. It is also to teach young citizens how to function in a multiracial society and to prepare them in many ways to be members of civil society. Second, it ignores the central point of the *Brown* decision: that legal segregation of the races in American society necessarily implies the inferiority of one race, regardless of the “equality” of facilities and other tangibles. Perhaps such critics expect too much from one decision. The fact that *Brown* has fallen short in delivering a dream of perfect harmony does not mean that it should never have been decided. (Editors 2004, 3)

Echoing their 2000 editorial (“Racism—Are We Ready to Answer the Question?”), the editors opined that “The question of how to achieve racial equality and justice for all citizens in a legally desegregated society is still far from answered.” Supercharging the import of *Brown v. Board* as a divine petition and axiological hope rather than solely a material reality, the editors concluded: “Much more than a mere legal decision, *Brown* was, indeed, what one law professor has called a ‘moral prayer.’ Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Bahá’ís again applaud the Court’s decision” (Editors 2004, 4).

Perhaps not content to end their influence there, and to soften their prior stance, the editors used the space of “Interchange” (the section of letters to the editor) to further pontificate on *Brown v. Board* and to reassure the reader that many different “perspectives” would be offered in the volume:

The elimination of racial prejudice, a central tenet of the Baha'i Faith and one of the most vital and challenging issues facing the United States, has occupied the Editors since a review of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

appeared in *World Order*'s first issue in Fall 1966. We found that the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court that started the judicial desegregation of U.S. schools, afforded an opportunity to look at the matter from a number of perspectives (*World Order* 2004, 6)

Reflecting *World Order*'s 1990's dual commitment to emphasizing and sacralizing individual resistance to racial prejudice and the dismantling of systemic racism among organizations, governments, and dominant ideologies, the articles in the 2004 volume concentrated on both.

Taking up an individual focus, the first voice of the issue was June Manning Thomas, a Bahá'í and professor of urban planning. Thomas grounded her perspective in her memories as a student who helped integrate an all-White high school in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Thomas concluded that abolishing prejudice required profound behavioral sacrifices as well as the incubation of new attitudes among individuals, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í alike. "The effort to overcome the effects of discrimination and to allow everyone to live a life free from racial prejudice is a spiritual task, requiring opening hearts and making fundamental, life-altering changes" (J. Thomas 2004, 18). Also aligned with this approach was Richard W. Thomas's "Teaching about *Brown v. Board of Education*" which detailed his use of Richard Kluger's book *Simple Justice* which Thomas felt provided students "black-and-white role models to emulate in the ongoing struggle for racial justice and the building of a unified society" (R. Rhomas 2004, 32). While these two articles concentrated on individual initiatives in the continued struggle to achieve racial equality, they were outliers in the volume.

In marked distinction to such an individuated focus on prejudice and bigotry, was Steven Gonzales's "The Road to *Brown*," which identified how governmental, constitutional, military, demographic, and legal factors both reproduced and repudiated

racial inequality and segregation. A professor of constitutional law at Western Michigan University, Gonzales penned an article devoid of any appeal to religious sentiment to focus instead on how “*Brown* is linked to great themes in American history” (Gonzales 2004, 21), Gonzales identified five such themes: (1) First, the “flawed” tension of “Federalism v. State’s Rights” that legally enshrined national disunity and competition; (2) Constitutional allowance of slavery; (3) “the Civil War and its aftermath” including the reaction against Reconstruction that culminated in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896); (4) changing demographics of the twentieth century, and; (5) “the changing legal environment” marked by Eisenhower’s 1953 appointment of Earl Warren and the prior 1946 case of *Mendez v. Westminster School District* in which the Supreme Court contravened *Plessy*, “holding that, whatever the national standard, the ‘equal protection of the laws pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided’ *Mendez*, indeed, paved the way for *Brown*” (Gonzales 2004, 25-26). After covering these themes, Gonzales reiterated that Americans are faced with “parallel traditions” of “injustice . . . deliberate ignorance, material gain, and political compromise” on the one hand and the “glorious tradition articulated in the lofty principle of the Framers” (Gonzales 2004, 28).

In a related topic, Ted Amsden (a Bahá’í attorney and diversity consultant) examined three legal cases pertaining to desegregation (*University of California Regents v. Bakke* in 1978 and *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* in 2003) in his article “Interracial Unity: The Implications of a Judicial Deadline”. Writing about “affirmative action” as the major legal and policy tool to enact desegregation in colleges and universities, Amsden focused on Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s statement that “We

expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today” in the majority opinion for *Grutter v. Bollinger*.

With a tone of concern and prophecy (reflecting perhaps the 2023 Supreme Court decision regarding affirmative action), Amsden thus wrote:

The implications of the Court's statement in the *Grutter* case are not clear. But it may be a warning that the Court's “permission” to use race as a factor in any way in admission decisions in higher education has a time limit. Essentially, the Court's majority opinion has stated its expectation that, in twenty-five years-by 2028-racial inequities that foster the need for racial considerations in higher-education admissions should no longer be so prevalent as to require such considerations. The Court does not state specifically whether racial considerations would still be permitted in twenty-five years if racial inequities were still prevalent. But clearly one should not assume that the Court would continue to allow race to be a factor in whether a person were admitted to a public institution of higher education. Twenty five years from now a very different group of Supreme Court Justices will be asked what the statement in the *Grutter* decision means. (Amsden 2004, 43)

These articles, while focused on the legal, economic, ideological, and policy causes and effects of structural racism and inequality, made no mention of religion overall or the Bahá'í Faith in specific. Rather, their common denominator was how larger social and cultural shifts may impede or facilitate the quest for racial equality. One article that did include a discussion of structural racism and religion in regard to the legacy of *Brown v. Board* was Michael Penn's “Reflections on *Brown*.” Given his profession as a professor of psychology and as a practicing Bahá'í, Penn centered his article on the psychological effects of segregation years after *Brown v. Board* was decided and how its ideals were far from realized:

Notwithstanding these successes, in many important respects the *Brown* decision has failed to effect the magnitude of change that was possible because Americans, as a people, have not always applied the social remedies embodied in the Supreme Court's courageous mandate when it ordered local and state governments to desegregate “with all deliberate speed.” On the contrary, even today, more than a half-century after *Brown*,

Americans persist in using strategies of delay and have, throughout the country, continued to construct new neighborhoods that ensure that middle- and upper-class white children can avoid associating with mostly urban and poor minority children Thus the pernicious effects of the segregated system that *Brown* sought to remedy continue to be felt. (Penn 2004, 36)

While Penn's thesis did pertain to tight-knit analysis of race and religion, he concluded his article by highlighting the long-standing practice of Bahá'í integration and "racial amity" meetings as an already-achieved exemplar for the ideals of *Brown v. Board* and thus characterized the American Bahá'í community as "the most diverse yet socially integrated body of people on the planet":

By the time of the *Brown* decision, Bahá'ís in the United States were electing African Americans to local and national Bahá'í governing bodies, appointing them to local and national Bahá'í committees, holding interracial Bahá'í schools, and promoting racial-amity meetings. The spirit embodied by the American Bahá'ís—black and white—has contributed to the development of a worldwide community that may well represent the most diverse yet socially integrated body of people on the planet. (Penn 2004, 39)

While Penn argued that combatting racial inequality and racism necessitated a structural approach, given the overarching economic, education, and psychological repercussions of a separate and unequal country, he opined that such attention was itself insufficient without a spiritual animus. With a shift into Bahá'í racial apologetics, Penn then wrote that the Bahá'í spirit of "oneness and solidarity must spread until it envelops the whole human community" (Penn 2004, 39) with the conclusion that the ideals of *Brown v. Board* would only be realized with the infusion of a divine and spiritual worldview that would truly animate secular legal decisions. "Then and only then will the vision of *Brown* have achieved its consummation" (Penn 2004, 39). This issue's attention to the half-century of social changes since *Brown v. Board* would be *World Order*'s last discussion of anything remotely resembling a focus on structural racism or inequality.

Summation

The last two decades of American Bahá'í periodical discourse seemed schizophrenic in its tone and timbre. On the one hand, editors and authors focused heavily on identifying individual actors who opposed racism in its sundry, devastating forms. These stories were inspirational and served as templates on which contemporary readers could model their actions. In these accounts, racism and racial inequality could be overturned by a few good-hearted people, dedicated to Bahá'í principles, who in turn, transformed the racially-biased hearts and minds of individual people. At the same time, *World Order* published many articles that concentrated on racism as a structural issue. In these articles, racism persisted in law, custom, habit, and policies regardless of the consciousness or even the spiritual maturity of the actors involved. The actions of people to redress racism would be muted, if not made inconsequential, without attention to changing the larger and systemic social relationships. Here, racism did not within the person, but in the relationships between people. That Janus-faced approach equally applied to the discussion of *Brown v. Board*. Seeming to speak past one another, some articles trumpeted individual initiatives to resist racial prejudice while other articles focused on the systemic causes and effects of segregation and *Brown v. Board*'s implementation to redress the long legacy of *Plessy*. This two-pronged approach is not necessarily at odds. But rarely did authors or editors make the point that racism could be combatted simultaneously on the micro-level of interpersonal transformation and the larger, macro-level of social structural change. Rather, in reading *World Order* over this time, it would be difficult not to see these two strategies as portrayed within a zero-sum game.

The next two years (2005-2006) of *World Order*'s mentions of race were marked by a hagiographic focus on two African American Bahá'ís: Alain Locke (Buck 2005a, 2005b, Smith 2006) and Robert Hayden (Editors 2005; Smith 2005; Mitchell 2005). Aside from these biographic articles, the last issues of the publication of *World Order* (2007) entered a period of racial quietism. Without explanation, *World Order* ceased publication with its last issue (Volume 38, issue 3) even as the back page of the issue advertised several “forthcoming” articles, one of which was supposed to continue in the trend of highlighting individual African American Bahá'ís in Mike McMullen's book review of *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá'ís in North America, 1898-2000*, edited by Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Richard Thomas. But that review, and the next issue of *World Order*, would not appear.

Chapter XI.

Conclusion

The American Bahá'í periodical discussion of race and racial prejudice traversed an undulating landscape over nearly one hundred years'. Starting with *Bahai Bulletin* in 1908 and then *Star of the West* in 1909, these journals focused on “race amity” and the so-named conferences that centered on the Black-White color-line and the implicit resistance to Jim Crow through integrated meetings (1912-1921). By the 1920s, discourse shifted to a search for the causes of individual people's prejudice alongside discussions of the concept of race itself as an arbitrary and strange category that held little logic or universal truth. During this time, race was used as a label for a vague social force that divided and pitted people against one another, thus unnaturally working against the Bahá'ís theological stipulation that humanity's inherent purpose was to be unified and cooperative. Discussion soon turned more triumphant yet simultaneously foreboding, as Bahá'ís catalogued their successes of integrated meetings in the face of Jim Crow, while they also began to assert apocalyptic and tragic endings for American society if people failed to appropriately reckon, socially and spiritually, with racial divisions. Bahá'ís especially were called to double down on the Scriptural imperative to unify across racial barriers, which were, materially and artificially imposed against the spiritual reality of humanity.

By 1927 and with the introduction of *World Unity*, discourse was influenced by the rise of sociology, which reflected the journal's broadening search for the causes of

prejudice within individual people to a larger search for understanding how prejudice operates, especially within groups, organizations, and collectives. Moreover, the introduction of *World Unity* took a different tack than did *Star of the West*, as it emphasized more scholarly and scientific articles that both challenged and reproduced the rise of rationales for racial equality in the more public debates over the reality of race and its role in determining human behavior. Early 1930s discourse showed American Bahá'ís to adopt and adapt scientific racism's concept of "race traits". Periodicals occasionally cited such race traits as positive elements of humanity's diversity, and through racial unification, each race (with their attendant strengths and weaknesses) could cooperate to make humanity a stronger whole. This stance was, however, often contradicted. Many articles in the 1930s disagreed with any concept of race as having distinct traits or characteristics, leaving the entire definition of race muddled and rather incoherent during this time.

By 1935 *World Order* emerged as the sole journal, and responding to both the growing Nazi power in Europe as well as the racist pseudo-science of eugenics in the U.S., it took on a decidedly anti-racist stance. Despite this overt standpoint, varied and contradictory constructions of race and racial prejudice emerged over the late 1930s and into the 1940s, from an emphasis on how economics and nationalism could facilitate racial hostilities, to how a dominant understanding of "culture" as both a community bond and barrier was becoming a popular and scholarly synonym for race. As the 1940s wore to a close, World War II's destruction and racism thrust the utopian projections of what scientific materialism into doubt, so that secular political and social solutions were deemed insufficient and required spiritual answers. Bahá'ís discourse increasingly

advocated that only faith in Bahá'u'lláh could remove prejudice from people's hearts, and only the Bahá'í teachings could supply models for new and racially equitable social structures.

World Order closed its doors in 1949 only to reopen in 1966 in the crucible of the Civil Rights movement. In midst of such debate, riots, and assassinations, the journal constructed race and racial prejudice as existing simultaneously in the domains of hierarchical social structures and as a set of dysfunctional cultural practices and beliefs. Such a disjointed approach was marked by careful reviews of books that directly confronted the challenge of racial prejudice, while many articles ran the spectrum of debating the nature of prejudice, from individual moral failings to educational inadequacies. By the early 1970s, discourse centered on the “culture of poverty” as a culprit for inequality, but soon the focus on “culture” became overly broad and so opaque as to lose meaning. In the late ‘70s and into the 1980s, *World Order* evidenced appeal to color-blindness, or the refusal to see race, in order to avoid being prejudiced or behaving in a discriminatory way. This emphasis was combined with articles that promoted past Bahá'í community successes with race coupled with future imaginations of a both racial utopia or catastrophe in America. That is, in the late 1980s, there emerged a purposeful focus on racial prejudice and racism as “the most challenging issue”. However, the nature of prejudice and racism, how it spread, how it could be mitigated, and the relationship of prejudice and racism to issues of spirituality and the overall Bahá'í goal of unity, never reached consensus. After another brief hiatus of the journal between 1990 and 1992, the mid-1990s and 2000s saw a somewhat bifurcated focus on individual Bahá'í heroes of the past alongside attention to varied aspects of institutional and

structural racism, which culminated in discussion of the effects of *Brown v. Board* from 1954 to 2004.

The Discursive Construction of an Imagined Community

By examining the varied historical moments of the American Bahá'í periodical discursive constructions of race and racial prejudice, we have come to see how these varied definitions and concepts intersected with explicit and coherent understandings of how American Bahá'ís should pursue the quest for racial equality and unity as serious social and spiritual problems. Rather than only describe this nexus, many of the articles' proscriptive hermeneutics illustrate the creation of an identity and movement.

First, identity construction is largely discursive. This claim gestures toward the import of *talk* that is usually softened in relation to *action*. "On this traditional view" Richard Buttny (2004, 1) writes, "talk is merely at the micro level and is constrained by, or an epiphenomenon of, these more important social or psychological structures." I resist this bifurcation and see discourse as constitutive of the vehicle that bespeaks it. That is, the American Bahá'í periodical discourse about race helped to make an American Bahá'í identity *vis-à-vis* race. Said plainly: "At the most basic level, the point is simply that people actively produce identity through their talk" (Howard 2000, 371-372). These articles are thus "speech acts" that perform illocutionary and perlocutionary functions: both implying actions and meanings as well as alarming, clarifying, persuading, or otherwise inspiring actions and meanings. These can have particularly deleterious or positive repercussions, regardless of the intent of the author. Hence, in appropriating the reference to a famous children's rhyme, Anthony Appiah wrote, "Sticks and stones may

break bones, but words—words that evoke structures of oppression, exploitation, and brute physical threat—can break souls” (Appiah 1989, 43).

Second, while it may be tempting to view these published articles as only a collection of individual authors’ desires or ideological prescriptions, the social constructionist perspective examines the totality of this discourse *sui generis*. “Within conversations . . . the social world is created” (van Langenhove and Harré 1999, 15). That is, the holistic examination of discourse reveals how such the discourse labored to frame the Bahá’í Faith into *the* social movement vehicle for changing race relations. This kind of “frame alignment” exemplifies a collective attempt to (1) construct a problem and assign blame, (2) propose a prognostic strategy and tactic, and (3) offer a call to arms or motivational rationale for action (cf. Snow, et al. 2014).

Through such identity formation and social movement alignment, the periodicals functioned to create social bonds and a sense of community across disparate locales via the common consumption of knowledge. Rhodes (2001, 153) unpacks how media enables the creation of a politicized peoplehood:

Media that enabled patterns of interaction and a sense of belonging was the glue... in the absence of a ‘place’. In his study of media and national identity in Britain, David Morley notes ‘the imagined community is, in fact, usually constructed in the language of some particular ethnos’, that accords membership in a political formation.

But beyond politics, these American Bahá’í periodicals helped to define the contours of what Morley and Rhodes referred to, and what Anderson (1983) famously coined as, “the imagined community.” These American Bahá’í organs enabled readers to both define contested and fraught concepts, such as “race” and “prejudice”, and relate those to their positions within the respective religious ideologies, faith communities, and lived experiences during the 20th century—a period of sweeping scientific, legal, and cultural

changes. The articles analyzed reflect how questions about race and prejudice are near and dear to American Bahá'í understandings and individual spiritual growth, whether in terms of mundane daily living or larger issues such as legal segregation. The regularity of the publication of such articles functioned in ways similar to how Anderson (1983, 39-40) described (fittingly, given the example of prayer) the effect of regular media consumption:

The significance of this mass ceremony – Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life.

With Bahá'í ideals then rooted in “everyday life”, and with an imagined community being repeatedly established, the narratives within these periodicals contained storylines and characters that readers could use to better understand varied nuances of their racialized spiritual community in order to distinguish fact from fiction, akin to what Michel Foucault referred to as a “truth game” (1988). That is, the analysis of *Bahai Bulletin*, *Star of the West*, *World Unity Magazine*, and *World Order* consistently embodied the four registers of “truth claims” laid out by Foucault (1988:18):

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves

in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

Given these criteria (cf. Hughey 2009c for other periodical uses of Foucault's four registers of truth claims), American Bahá'ís periodicals first served as a “technology of production”: as printed organ within the political economy of the media that transferred religious (as well as scientific, philosophical, and layperson ideologies) knowledge about race into technologically controllable and economically usable products. Second, it was a “technology of sign systems”: a semiotic assemblage of drew upon concepts, words, and representations (e.g. salvation, oppression, forgiveness, unity) to form a new American language of race and religion. Third, it was a “technology of power”: as a written conduit of Bahá'í canonical texts, traditions, and practices that contained the messages of both Central Figures and respected institutions as well as renowned Bahá'ís among the laity, these pages served as authoritative pronouncements on the reality of race in both sacred and secular life. Fourth, it was a “technology of the self”: as an American Bahá'ís read these pages they formed an imagined American Bahá'í community, constituted by both the acts of reading consumption, but through the content and debate that ensured. The topics in these pages transformed the American Bahá'í community into a collective selfhood intimately concerned with the causes and consequences of the material and spiritual dimensions of racism.

Avenues for Future Study

The variation in *World Order* social constructions of race and racial prejudice adds nuance to the story of American racialization. The discussion of Bahá'í attempts to define race, demonstrate its relationship to prejudice, and confront biological

determinism, together illumine the simultaneous use and contestation of layperson, scientific, secular, and other religious traditions' understandings of race and human difference. Yet, such a realization generates additional questions for future study.

First, most discussions concerned African Americans and White/Black relations, but what of other racial groups? A focused analysis of American Bahá'ís periodicals beyond the conventional color-line would add necessary information about Bahá'í racial constructions that might confound the findings of this analysis. Relatedly, a wider search of American Bahá'ís periodicals with more varied terms pertaining to race, or a larger examination of Bahá'ís media representations in general, might yield conclusions in variance with those herein.

Second, while the magazine's use of Black authorship during Jim Crow and the uneasy race relations of the 20th century was certainly radical, such articles occasionally papered-over the racial fissures that certainly occurred within the American Bahá'í community. In that vein, an analysis of articles alongside national or local Bahá'í activities would illumine how these articles served as kind of political credential or as a reflection of race relations in Bahá'í community life.

Third, did Black-authorship in American Bahá'í periodicals, especially *World Order*, generate more Bahá'í attention to either authors or issues? There exist many positive, if not hagiographic, accounts of the lives of Black Bahá'í authors in these journals (such as Louis Gregory or Alain Locke), but is there a similar amount of information available about what they explicitly said about race? Either a modern reception study of American Bahá'ís or a critical review of American Bahá'ís literature

could reveal exactly how, and to what extent, these figures' personas and prose were canonized into Bahá'í memory and deemed worthy of commemoration.

Fourth, how might other Bahá'í journals, yearbooks, Facebook groups and other social media, blogs, zines, and older print publications, as well as newspapers and journals outside the U.S. add either greater nuance or broader conclusions on the relationship between the Bahá'í Faith, race, and prejudice?

Fifth, a comparative study of another developing faith in the U.S. would better contextualize many of these findings. For instance, how might a similar analysis of Islam's, media representations, both within mainstream newspapers and within American Muslim periodicals (whether mainstream Sunni or sects with racialized underpinnings such as the Nation of Islam), better illuminate disparate ideological framing and assumptions? Or, given the tight association between Islam and the Bahá'í Faith, the comparison of media discourse between the Bahá'í Faith and "native" U.S. Christian faiths such the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Seventh-day Adventism, might lend toward better understanding of what choices authors made in attempting to relate their faiths to the exigencies of race in the U.S.

Appendix 1.

Mentions of Race and Racial Prejudice in American Bahá'í Periodicals

Table 1. *Bahai Bulletin* Articles

Volume (Issue)	Year	Title	Author(s)
1(1)	1908	Editorial Department	Editors
1(1)	1908	The News From Acca	Editors
1(5)	1909	The News From Acca	Editors
1(5)	1909	The Message: Bahaism: Its Ethical and Social Teachings	Miss E. J. Rosenberg

Table 2. *Star of the West* Articles

Volume (Issue)	Year	Title	Author(s)
1(2)	1910	Washington, D.C.	Jos H. Hannen
1(3)	1910	Washington, D.C.	Joseph H. Hannen
2(1)	1911	News from the Occident. Oakland, Cal	Ella Goodall Cooper
2(2)	1911	London, England, News Notes	Arthur Cuthbert
2(9)	1911	The First Universal Races Congress	Mr. W. Tudor-Pole
2(9)	1911	untitled	Thorton Chase
2(12)	1911	Extracts from a recent letter written by Mr. Charles Mason Remey	Charles Mason Remey
2(14)	1911	With Abdul-Baha in Switzerland	Miss Juliet Thompson
2(15)	1911	The Bahai Movement	J. Stannard
3(7)	1912	Interview of W. H. Short, Secy. N. Y. Peace Society and Hudson Maxim with Abdul-Baha at Hotel Ansonia, New York City, April 15, 1912.	Howard MacNutt
3(8)	1912	Reception to Abdul-Baha by the New York Peace Society at Hotel Astor, May 13, 1912. Address by Mrs. Spencer	Mrs. Spencer
7(7)	1916	The First Session of the Convention and the Third Session of the Congress	Louis G. Gregory
7(15)	1916	The Social Teachings of the Bahai Movement	George O. Latimer
8(14)	1917	Centennial Celebration of the Birth of Baha'o'llah	Louis G. Gregory
9(3)	1918	The Sterling Faithfulness of Esfandayar	From Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab
10(3)	1919	The Bahai Movement Is it the coming Universal Religion?	Jean Masson
10(7)	1919	The Universal House of Worship Tablet of New Permission for Dr.	Mrs. Corinne True
11(12)	1920	Bagdadi and family--News brought by him--The Mashrekol-Azkar	Roy C. Wilhelm
11(15)	1920	The Bahai Revelation	Jenabi Fazel Mazandarani
12(1)	1921	The Bahai Revelation	Louise R. Waite
12(6)	1921	Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races	Louis G. Gregory

12(6)	1921	"Now is the time for the Americans to unite both the white and colored races"	Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi
12(10)	1921	Pen Pictures of Abdul-Baha in America	Juliet Thompson
12(13)	1921	A Week in Abdul-Baha's Home	Genevieve L. Coy
12(19)	1922	Dr. Moses L. Murphy	Louis G. Gregory
13(3)	1922	Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Race	Roy Williams
13(11)	1923	Our Trip to Haifa in the Summer of 1922	Stanwood Cobb
13(11)	1923	Inter-Racial Amity	Louis G. Gregory
13(11)	1923	World Peace through the Discovery of One God	Fayette McKenzie
14(1)	1924	The Oneness of the Human World	Louis G. Gregory
14(12)	1924	The Future of the Indian Race	Stanwood Cobb
15(1)	1924	Constantinople Days	Stanwood Cobb
15(1)	1924	The Abandonment of Prejudices	Louis G. Gregory
15 (1)	1924	Impressions of Haifa	Alain L. Locke
15 (1)	1924	The Universal Solvent	Horace Holley
15(4)	1924	Finding a Basis for World Unity	Coralie Franklin Cook
15(5)	1924	Grave Danger	Mariam Haney
15(7)	1924	The Spirit of Hawaii and its Food Conservation Conference	Agnes Alexander
15(7)	1924	World Thought and Progress	Editors
15(9)	1924	A Convention for Amity	Louis G. Gregory
15(10)	1925	Ideal Education	Isabella D. Brittingham
15(12)	1925	Abandonment of Prejudice	Barbara Probasco
16(1)	1925	Peace--A Result--Not a Cause	Grace Ober
16(3)	1925	Prophecy	The Editor
16(3)	1925	Cape Town--The Tavern of the Seas	Martha L. Root
16(3)	1925	The Point of Contact	Orrol L. Harper
16(4)	1925	A Conference for World Unity at San Francisco, March 20-22, 1925	Prof. J. V. Breitwieser
16(5)	1925	Institute of Pacific Relations at Honolulu	Agnes B. Alexander
16(9)	1925	A Movement of Progress	Dr. Orrol L. Harper
16(9)	1925	The Divine Center Essential to Peace	Teikichi Satow
16(10)	1926	Differences Between Eastern and Western Civilizations	Prof. Masaharu Anesaki
17(3)	1926	A Study in Comparative Religions	L. Valera Fisher
17(4)	1926	The Oneness of Mankind	Louis G. Gregory

17(4)	1926	The Eventual Unity	Albert R. Vail
17(7)	1926	untitled	The Editors
17(9)	1926	World Thought and Progress: Internationalism and Race Prejudice	The Editors
17(12)	1926	An Amity World Unity Conference	Louis G. Gregory
18(1)	1927	Race Appreciation	Hooper Harris
18(2)	1927	Glimpses of a Great Gathering	Coralie Franklin Cook
18(4)	1927	The Abolition of Prejudices	Florence A. Clapp
18(5)	1927	Amity and Green Acre	Louis G. Gregory
18(10)	1928	A Baha'i Inter-Racial Conference	Dr. Alain Locke
19(7)	1928	Phyllis Wheatley--An African Genius	Mary Church Terrell
19(8)	1928	Can the Races Harmonize?	Louis G. Gregory
19(12)	1929	The Races of Men--Many or One?, Pt I	Louis G. Gregory
20(1)	1929	The Races of Men--Many or One?, Pt II	Louis G. Gregory
20(7)	1929	King Amity the Third	Louis G. Gregory
21(3)	1930	New Attitudes on Color	Leslie R. Hawthorn
21(10)	1931	Above the Color Line	Coralie Franklin Cook
21(11)	1931	Civilization, Race and Intelligence	Stanwood Cobb
22(2)	1931	Negro--A Book Review	Coralie Franklin Cook
22(4)	1931	Organic and Social Evolution	Kokichi Sumi
22(5)	1931	Light on Basic Unity	Louis G. Gregory
22(5)	1931	Hawaii Proving Ground of Pacific Problems	Wallace R. Farrington
22(8)	1931	Educator and Publicist	Alain L. Locke
23(2)	1932	Editorial	Stanwood Cobb
23(2)	1932	Bahá'ís Contribute Significantly to Racial Brotherhood	Coralie Franklin Cook
23(7)	1932	Signs of the New Day	Louis G. Gregory
24(6)	1933	Awakening to Reality	Louis G. Gregory
24(8)	1933	New Visions of Human Unity: Interracial Amity Work at Green Acre	Compiled from reports by Louis G. Gregory and Harlan F. Ober
25(2)	1934	Race Prejudice--A Barrier to the Soul	E. B. M. Dewing
25(3)	1934	The Racial Myth	Edwin L. Mattern

Table 3. *World Unity* Articles

Volume (Issue)	Year	Title	Author(s)
1(1)	1927	Wisdom of the Ages	Alfred W. Martin
1(1)	1927	The Scientific and Religious Drive Towards Unity	Herbert Adolphus Miller
1(1)	1927	The Biological Sanctions of World Unity, Pt I	Ernest Maurice Best
1(3)	1927	The Biological Sanctions of World Unity, Pt II	Ernest Maurice Best
1(4)	1928	The Interaction of Europe and Asia, Pt II	William R. Shepherd
1(5)	1928	The Interaction of Europe and Asia, Pt III	William R. Shepherd
1(6)	1928	The Interaction of Europe and Asia, Pt IV	William R. Shepherd
1(6)	1928	Is Prejudice Against Inter-racial Marriage Decreasing?	Editors
2(1)	1928	The Rising Tide	John Herman Randall, Jr.
2(2)	1928	Intellectual World Cooperation	Lucia Ames Mead
2(3)	1928	The Rising Tide	John Herman Randall, Jr.
2(4)	1928	Correspondence	editors
2(6)	1928	The Rising Tide	John Herman Randall, Jr.
3(1)	1928	Progress by Telic Guidance, Pt IV	Mary Hull
3(2)	1928	The One and the Many	Abba Hillel Silver
3(2)	1928	Racial Differences and World Unity	Frank H. Hankins
3(3)	1928	Why War and Revolution	Herbert Adolphus Miller
3(4)	1929	Progress by Telic Guidance, Pt VII	Mary Hull
3(5)	1929	Racial Relationships and International Harmony, Pt I	Frank H. Hankins
3(6)	1929	The Naturalization Law of the United State of America	S. G. Pandit
3(6)	1929	Racial Relationships and International Harmony, Pt II	Frank H. Hankins
4(2)	1929	Racial Relationships and International Harmony, Pt III	Frank H. Hankins
4(3)	1929	Racial Relationships and International Harmony, Pt IV	Frank H. Hankins

4(3)	1929	Can Race Relationships be Taught in the Classroom	Verdine Peck Hull
4(4)	1929	Racial Relationships and International Harmony, Pt V	Frank H. Hankins
4(4)	1929	Racial Amity	Clifford L. Miller
4(6)	1929	Unity is Not Equality	Charlotte Perkins Gilman
5(1)	1929	A Memorable Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	Robert W. Bagnell
5(1)	1929	Nationalism and Internationalism	Herbert Adams Gibbons
5(4)	1930	A World Community	John Herman Randall
5(4)	1930	The Quest of World Peace, Pt I	Dexter Perkins
5(5)	1930	The Quest of World Peace, Pt I	Dexter Perkins
7(1)	1930	Elements of a World Culture, Pt I	Cassius J. Keyser
8(1)	1931	The Meeting Place of the East and West	Horace Holley
8(5)	1931	How Orient and Occident Can be Correlated	Taraknath Das
10(6)	1932	Orient and Occident	Hans Kohn
11(1)	1932	Hawaii: A Solution of the Race Problem	Herbert Adolphus Miller
11(5)	1933	The Medial Man: A New Concept of Human Progress	Louise D. Boyle
12(4)	1933	International Co-Citizenship: The Sole Basis of Permanent International Peace	Raphael Buck
12(4)	1933	World Citizenship	Carl A. Ross
13(4)	1934	Race Conflicts in Today's World	Hans Kohn
13(6)	1934	Should Black Turn Red	Kelly Miler
14(1)	1934	World Citizenship	Carl A. Ross
14(2)	1934	Jan Smuts	Hamilton Fyfe
14(2)	1934	The Psychology of Race Prejudice	John Clifton Moffitt
14(4)	1934	The Racial Factor in International Relations	Sasadhar Sinha
14(5)	1934	A Biological Attitude Toward Human Affairs, Pt II	Vladimir Karapetoff
14(6)	1934	A Biological Attitude Toward Human Affairs, Pt III	Vladimir Karapetoff
15(1)	1934	Spiritual Needs in This Time of Crisis	Edgar J. Fischer
15(2)	1934	Christianity and Race Relations	J. C. McMorries
15(3)	1934	Sociology and World Unity	Elsa P. Kimball

Table 4. *World Order* Articles

Volume (Issue)	Year	Title	Author(s)
1(1)	1935	Religion, Race, and Unity	Paul Russell Anderson
1(2)	1935	Race Prejudice	C. F. Andrews
1(5)	1935	Keeping Square with the World	Dale S. Cole
1(7)	1935	Race and Politics	Herbert Adolphus Miller
1(8)	1935	Education in World Friendship	Gertrude E. N. King
1(9)	1935	The World Issue of Race	Horace Holley
2(1)	1936	A Gift to Race Enlightenment	Louis G. Gregory
2(2)	1937	Seven Candles of Unity, A Symposium. VI. Unity of Races	Genevieve L. Coy
2(10)	1937	Influences Which Change the Attitudes of Social Groups	Valdimir Karapetoff
2(10)	1937	The Study of the Negro	George Longe
3(1)	1937	Learning to Live Together: An Interview with Herbert A. Miller	Martha L. Root
3(3)	1937	Changing Race Relations	Maxwell Miller
4(3)	1938	The Individual and the World	George Orr Latimer
4(4)	1938	The Negro in America, Pt I	James A Scott
4(5)	1938	The Negro in America, Pt II	James A Scott
4(6)	1938	The World of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow	L. W. Schurgast
4(8)	1938	The Possibility of Progress	W. Russell Tylor
4(9)	1938	Just How 'Different' is the Negro?	Reid E. Jackson
4(9)	1938	The Adaptable Indian	Williard W. Beatty
4(10)	1939	Chinese Proverbs and Maxims	Stanwood Cobb
5(1)	1939	The Medial Man	Louise D. Boyle
5(8)	1939	American Indian	Olivia Kelsey
5(9)	1939	Bursting the Cage Asunder	Louis G. Gregory
5(11)	1940	Is There Division of Race?	Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick
6(2)	1940	The Internationalism of a Biologist: Book Review	Maye Harvey Gift
6(5)	1940	World Order: How?	Annamarie Kunz Honnold
6(10)	1941	An Approach to World Government	William Kenneth Christian
7(10)	1942	Baha'i Lessons: Race Unity	Editors

8(1)	1942	Black Hero	Ellsworth Blackwell
8(5)	1942	Color and Human Nature: Book Review	Garreta Busey
8(11)	1943	The Tabernacle of Unity	Phyllis Durroh
9(6)	1943	Dr. Carver's Tribute	Louis G. Gregory
9(8)	1943	The Destroyer of Society	Editors
9(9)	1943	Ways to Wholeness	Raymond Frank Piper
10(1)	1944	World Democracy and the Races	Robert W. Kenney
10(4)	1944	Social Basis in World Unity	Mary Elsie Austin
10(6)	1944	The Races of Mankind: Book Review	Arthur Dahl
10(9)	1944	Equal Before God	Editorial (G.B.)
10(12)	1945	Race and Man: Book Review	Maye Harvey Gift
11(3)	1945	Signs of the Times	Annamarie Kunz Honnold
11(8)	1945	Heritage to Youth	Eva Flack McAllister
11(10)	1946	Black Boy, Book Review	Arthur Dahl
11(12)	1947	One Nation: Book Review	Arthur Dahl
12(1)	1946	Robert Turner	Louis G. Gregory
12(10)	1947	The Anatomy of Prejudice	Duart Brown
12(10)	1947	Racial and Group Prejudice	Joseph Lander, M.D.
12(10)	1947	Black Metropolis: Book Review	Eleanor S. Hutchens
12(11)	1947	Racial Unity, Editorial	Gertrude K. Henning
13(1)	1947	A Bahá'í Declaration of Human Obligations and Rights	Editors
13(2)	1947	The Bahá'í Basis for Human Religions	David S. Ruhe, M.D.
13(3)	1947	Color-Blind: Book Review	Roberta K. Christian
13(4)	1947	The Advent of Divine Justice: Book Review	Charlotte M. Linfoot
14(4)	1948	The Real Challenge of Today	Mabel Hyde Paine
14(5)	1948	Elements of World Religion	Horace Holley
14(5)	1948	Our Basic Social Responsibility	Editorial (R.D.)
14(6)	1948	Why Can't We Be Friends?	Stanwood Cobb
1(1)	1966	A Pattern for Future Society	Arthur L. Dahl
1(2)	1966	Review of <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>	Glenford Mitchell
2(2)	1967	The Current Dilemma	Edwin C. Berry
2(2)	1967	The Three Faces of Harlem	Alexnder Garvin
2(3)	1968	Echoes From Southampton County: A review of William Stryron's <i>The Confessions of Nat Turner</i>	Edwin S. Redkey

2(4)	1968	A New Unionism	A. L. Lincoln
3(1)	1968	Human Rights and Employment	Hugh Jackson
3(1)	1968	Views on Education in a New World	Firuz Kazemzadeh
3(2)	1969	Frankenstein: An Allegorical Analysis	Allan L. Ward
4(1)	1969	The Cultural Encounter between Indian and White	Mary Dahm
4(1)	1969	Indian Bahá'ís of Bolivia	Gregory C. Dahl
4(4)	1970	Notes from No-Man's-Land: Observations on Interracial Adoption	John F. Dumbrill
5(1)	1970	Harlem Prep: Homocultural Education for a New Era	Edward F. Carpenter
5(2)	1970	The Politics of Faith: A New Political Culture	A. L. Lincoln
5(4)	1971	Education for Worldmindedness	Gayle Morrison
6(3)	1972	Anne Frank: The Child and the Legend	Rosey E. Pool
8(3)	1974	Universal Man and Prejudiced Man	Hossain B. Danesh
8(4)	1974	Oriental Scholarship and the Bahá'í Faith	Denis MacEoin
9(2)	1974	Economics and Moral Values	William S. Hatcher
10(2)	1975	Melting Pot or Boiling Cauldron: The Ethnic Experience in America	Nosratollah Rassekh
10(2)	1975	Conversations with Americans	Editors
10(3)	1976	Maroon Identity in Jamaica: 1655-1738	Rhett S. Jones
11(1)	1976	Errors in Jensen's Analysis	Hossain B. Danesh and William S. Hatcher
12(1)	1977	The Bahá'í Faith: World Religion of the Future?	Jacques Chouleur
13(2)	1979	Alain Locke's Social Philosophy	Ernest D. Mason
13(4)	1979	Long Hot Summers of Discontent	Editors
13(4)	1979	To Move the World: The Early Years of Louis Gregory	Gayle Morrison
14(1)	1979	To Move the World: Louis Gregory and 'Abdu'l-Bahá	Gayle Morrison
14(2)	1980	To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1920-1927	Gayle Morrison
15(1-2)	1981	Racial Prejudice: Still the Most Challenging Issue	Kazemzadeh, Firuz, Betty J. Fisher, Howard Garey, and Glenford E. Mitchell

16(1)	1981	Robert Hayden: A Life Upon These Shores	Pontheolla T. Williams
17(2)	1982	Some Reflections on Racial Unity: Review of <i>To Move the World</i>	Nosratollah Rassekh
18(1)	1983	The Poor In America: A Visionary Statement	June Thomas
19(3-4)	1985	Social and Economic Development Toward World Peace	Anne Rowley Breneman
20(1)	1985	Breaking the Bonds of Racism	Editors
20(2)	1985	Preventing and Combating Intolerance of Religion or Belief	Roger S. Clark
20(2)	1985	Pioneering Race Unity: The Chicago Bahá'ís, 1919-39	Mark Perry
21(1-2)	1986	Awakening to Universal Manhood: A Review of <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>	Glenford E. Mitchell
23(3-4)	1989	The Process of Social Change	Brian Aull
25(2)	1993	African American Women in the Bahá'í Faith, 1899-1919	Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis
25(3)	1994	The Bahá'í Faith in America: One Hundred Years	Robert H. Stockman
26(1)	1994	The Equality of the Races	Editors
26(1)	1994	Supporting an International Convention to Eliminate Racial Discrimination	Robert C. Henderson
26(3)	1995	The Role of Men in Establishing the Equality of Women	Hoda Mahmoudi
27(1)	1995	Of Webs and Ladders: Gender Equality in Bahá'í Law	Martha Leach Schweitz
27(4)	1996	Church Burnings: The Ugly Agony of Dying Order	Editors
28(2)	1997	The Journey Out of the Racial Divide	Michael Penn
32(1)	2000	Racism--Are We Ready to Answer the Question?	Editors
32(1)	2000	Turning Point: Women of African Descent and Writing in the Twentieth Century	Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis
32(2)	2000	Confused About Culture	Editorial

32(4)	2001	Interracial and Multiracial Unity Movements in the U.S.: Models for World Peace	Richard W. Thomas
33(1)	2001	Race: Neither Biological Fact nor Social Fiction	Algernon Austin
33(1)	2001	Ethnicity, Race, and a Possible Humanity	Arash Abizadeh
33(1)	2001	Children and Racism: The Complexities of Culture and Cognition	David Diehl and Elizabeth Ansel Kirsch
34(1)	2002	Racism and the Planning of Urban Spaces	June Manning Thomas
35(2)	2003	Studying and Appreciating Film: A Bibliographical Review of Selected Materials	Editors
35(4)	2004	Models and Enactments of Transformation: A Response	Charles V. Carnegie
35(4)	2004	Radical Black Feminism and the Bahá'í Faith: Moments of Connection, Models of Change	Michelle Maynerick
36(1)	2004	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> : The Beginning of Judicial Desegregation in the United States	Editors
36(1)	2004	School Desegregation and Social Change: Personal Memories	June Manning Thomas
36(1)	2004	The Road to <i>Brown</i>	Steven Gonzales
36(1)	2004	Teaching about <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> : Lessons in Race Relations for Today's History Students	Richard W. Thomas
36(1)	2004	Reflections on <i>Brown</i>	Michael Penn
36(1)	2004	Interracial Unity: The Implications of a Judicial Deadline	Ted Amsden
36(1)	2004	A Beacon of Unity: The Louis G. Gregory Bahá'í Museum, Charleston, South Carolina	Nancy Branham Songer
36(2)	2004	Rethinking "There Goes the Neighborhood"	Lynnea Yancy
36(3)	2005	Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Bahá'í Pluralist	Christopher Buck
36(3)	2005	Alain Locke in His Own Words: Three Essays	Christopher Buck
37(2)	2005	Emerging from a Heart-Shape in the Dust: Maturation in the Poetics of Robert Hayden	Derik Smith

37(2)	2005	Robert Hayden: Speaking across Three Decades	Editors
37(2)	2005	Reflections on a 1976 Interview with Robert Hayden	Glenford E. Mitchell
38 (3)	2006	Alain Locke: Four Talks Redefining Democracy, Education, and World Citizenship	Alain Locke (edited and introduced by Christopher Buck and Betty J. Fisher)
38 (3)	2006	Matters of Opinion: A Review of Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy by Christopher Buck	Derik Smith

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