

Alain Locke

“Race Amity” & the Bahá’í Faith



© 2007 by Christopher Buck

Dr. Christopher Buck, Panelist
Alain Locke Centenary Program
American Association of Rhodes Scholars
Blackburn Center, Howard University
Washington, D.C. — September 24, 2007

Thank you, Dr. Goodin. On this historic occasion, I've been asked to speak on a little-known dimension of Alain Locke's life: his adherence to a new world religion, known as the Bahá'í Faith. In this presentation, I will privilege Locke's role in the Bahá'í "race amity" movement. "Race amity" means "interracial unity." The Baha'i "race amity" movement was quite extraordinary—even radical—during the Jim Crow era of legalized segregation.

Black Arts & Race Amity

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

2

While Locke was promoting African American arts, he also championed race relations. In his 1935 one-page autobiography—his “psychograph” as he called it—Locke said that he was a “universalist in religion.” Locke was attracted to the universalist outlook of the Bahá’í Faith, and by the fact that the Bahá’ís were leaders in promoting interracial harmony during the racially divided Jim Crow era.

Keys to Locke's Thought

Harvard



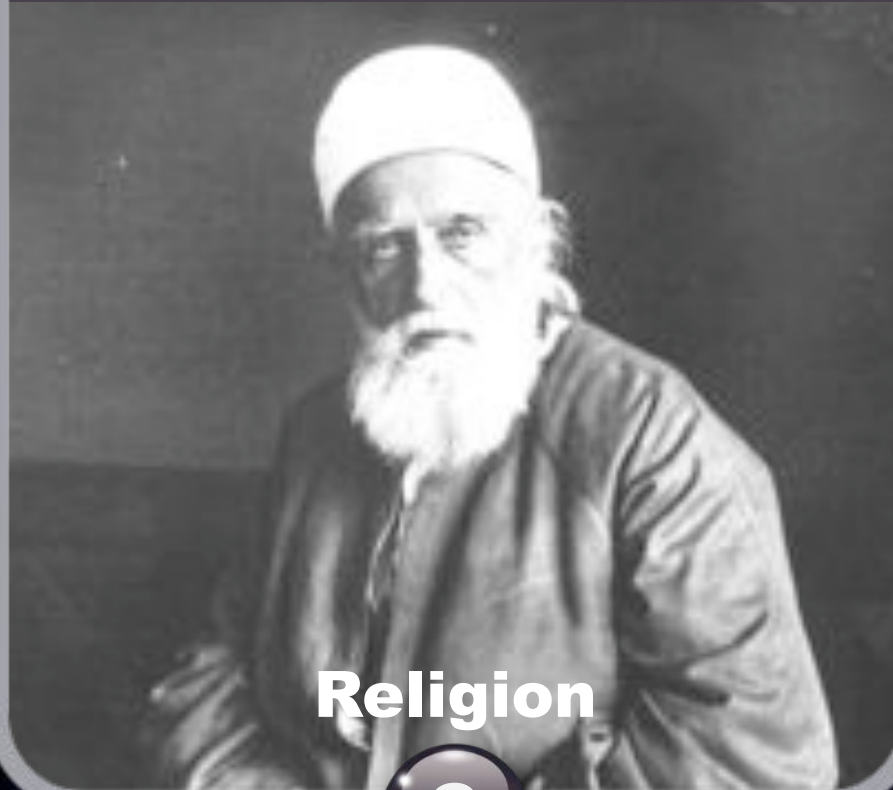
Philosophy

1

Josiah Royce

Harvard Philosopher

Haifa



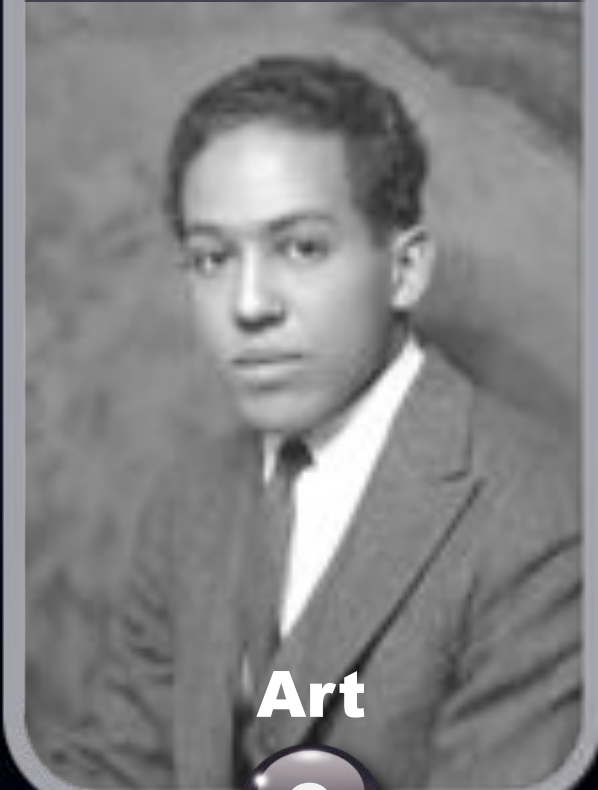
Religion

2

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'í Leader

Harlem



Art

3

Langston Hughes

Harlem Renaissance
Poet

In my book, "Alain Locke: Faith & Philosophy," I identify three major influences on Locke's thought, represented by these place names: Harvard, Haifa, and Harlem—representing, respectively, Philosophy, Religion, and Art. "Haifa" is a city in former Palestine, now Israel, where the World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith is located, on Mt. Carmel.



1918

Alain Locke in
Harvard doctoral
robe, with Oxford
University hood.

In 1918, Locke received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard University. Here, we see a Scurlock Studio print of Locke in Harvard doctoral robe and Oxford University hood. Locke's dissertation was "The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Values." It's a little-known fact that, in that same year, Locke found his own system of values when he embraced the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'í Historical Record

BAHÁ'Í HISTORICAL RECORD

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

3. Address 1326 R. St N. W Washington D. C.
Number Street City State

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

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

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

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

11. Children or dependents Misc Adult Adopted

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

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

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

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

1
9
1
8

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

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

This document, called a “Bahá'í Historical Record”—which Locke completed and signed in 1935—proves that Locke was a Bahá'í. Note Item #13: “Date of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith”: Locke answered: “1918.” And Item #14: “Place of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith.” Locke wrote: “Washington, D.C.”

Bahá'í Historical Record

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

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

C. Subsequent transfers (leave blank) _____

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

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

17. Additional information (do not fill in)

19. Signature
Alain Leroy Locke

(Additional notes may be attached to this card)

1
9
1
8

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

This historical document was signed: "Alain Leroy Locke," as you can see at the bottom right corner, under Item #19. Locke's "Bahá'í Historical Record" is preserved in the National Bahá'í Archives in Wilmette, IL.

Bahá'í Faith

Basic Facts



- **Newest independent world religion.**
- **Founder: Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892).**
- **Message: Unity of races, religions, nations.**
- **Key Beliefs: World unity, international law, harmony of science & religion, equality of men & women, interracial unity, universal education, advancing civilization & acquiring virtues.**
- **'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921) visited America (1912), taught race unity.**
- **Spoke at Howard University, April 22, 1912.**

Some basic facts: The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest independent world religion, founded by Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892). Its central message is the unity of races, religions, and nations. Key beliefs: World unity, international law, harmony of science & religion, equality of men & women, interracial unity, universal education, advancing civilization & acquiring virtues. In 1912, Bahá'u'lláh's son and successor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, visited America and spoke here at Howard University on April 22, 1912.

Interracial Unity Meeting

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND AN
INTER-RACIAL
UNITY MEETING
TO BE GIVEN BY THE BAHÁ'Í ASSEMBLY AT
"STUDIO HALL," 1216 CONNECTICUT AVENUE
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1912, AT 8.15 P. M.

"Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness."
"Do ye know why we have created ye from one clay? That no one should glorify
himself over the other."

IN CONFORMITY WITH THE FOREGOING WORDS OF BAHÁ'Í LLÁH,
ALL ARE WELCOME AT THIS MEETING, REGARDLESS
OF RACE, COLOR OR CREED

- "You are cordially invited to an interracial unity meeting."
- "All are welcome, regardless of race, color or creed."

1912

Two days before 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival in America, the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. hosted an "Interracial Unity Meeting." The invitation reads, in part: "You are cordially invited to an interracial unity meeting." "All are welcome, regardless of race, color or creed." Again, this is quite extraordinary during the Jim Crow era.



'Abdu'l-Bahá

New York, 1912.

Stressed vital
importance of race
unity for America &
the world.

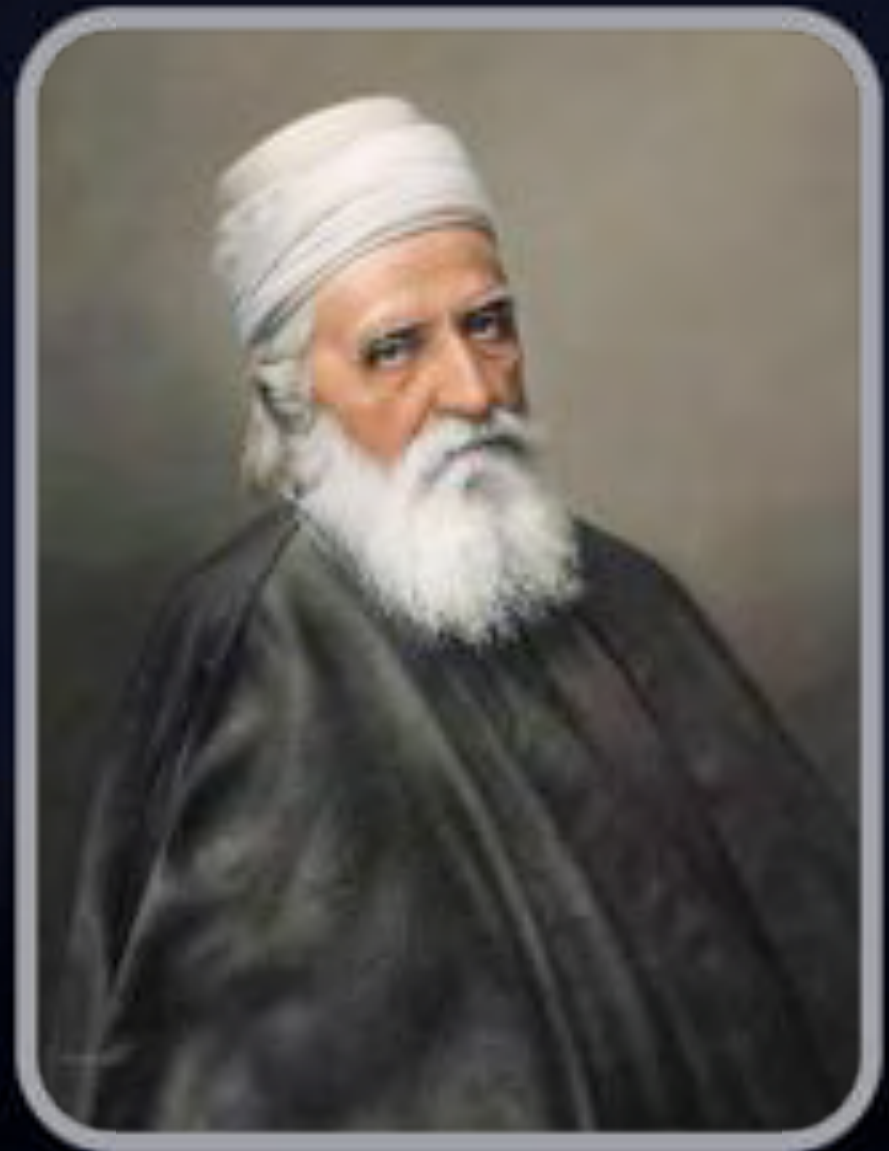
Here we see a photo of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, taken in New York in 1912. Throughout his travels and speaking engagements in the United States and Canada, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stressed the vital importance of race unity for America and for the world.

Blacks & Whites “Rubies & Pearls”

1912

- A meeting such as this seems like a beautiful cluster of precious jewels—pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires. It is a source of joy and delight.
- In the clustered jewels of the races may the blacks be as sapphires and rubies and the whites as diamonds and pearls.
- How glorious the spectacle of real unity among mankind!
- This is the sign of the Most Great Peace; this is the star of the oneness of the human world.

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



The day after speaking in Rankin Chapel here at Howard University, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “A meeting such as this seems like a beautiful cluster of precious jewels—pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires. It is a source of joy and delight. In the clustered jewels of the races may the blacks be as sapphires and rubies and the whites as diamonds and pearls. How glorious the spectacle of real unity among mankind! This is the sign of the Most Great Peace; this is the star of the oneness of the human world.”

Salvation of Democracy



“Bahá’í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.”

— Alain Locke, Bahá’í Congress at Green Acre, April 1925

11

In 1925, the year that he published “The New Negro”—acclaimed as the “first national book” of African Americans—Locke said: “Bahá’í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.” By the way, this film clip is from a silent film called NEGRO NOTABLES: NEGRO EDUCATION AND ART IN THE U.S (1937), kept in the National Archives and Records Administration.

Gospel of the 20th-Century



“The gospel for the Twentieth Century ... social salvation [is] Baha’u’llah’s ‘one great trumpet-call to humanity’: ‘That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; ... that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled’.”

— Alain Locke, “The Gospel of the Twentieth Century,” *World Order* 36.3 (2005).

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In an unpublished Bahá’í essay I discovered in the Alain Locke Papers, Locke writes: “The gospel for the Twentieth Century ... social salvation [is] Baha’u’llah’s ‘one great trumpet-call to humanity’: ‘That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; ... that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled’.” This rare film clip, of Alain Locke at his desk, is also from NEGRO NOTABLES, released in 1937.

Well-Known African American Bahá'ís



Robert S. Abbott

Publisher
Chicago Defender

Robert Hayden

First African
American
U.S. Poet-Laureate

Dizzy Gillespie

Founder Bebop/Jazz
"America's
Ambassador of
Music"

Dr. Elsie Austin

First African
American Assistant
Attorney-General
State of Ohio

Some well-known African American Bahá'ís include:

- 1. Robert S. Abbott (Publisher of The Chicago Defender);**
- 2. Robert Hayden (First African American Poet-Laureate of the United States");**
- 3. The late Dizzy Gillespie (co-founder of Bebop/modern Jazz, and acclaimed as "America's Ambassador of Music");**
- 4. Dr. Elsie Austin (First African American Assistant Attorney-General, State of Ohio).**

Other Illustrious Bahá'ís



Queen Marie
of Romania



Carole Lombard
Hollywood Actress
Wife of Clark Gable



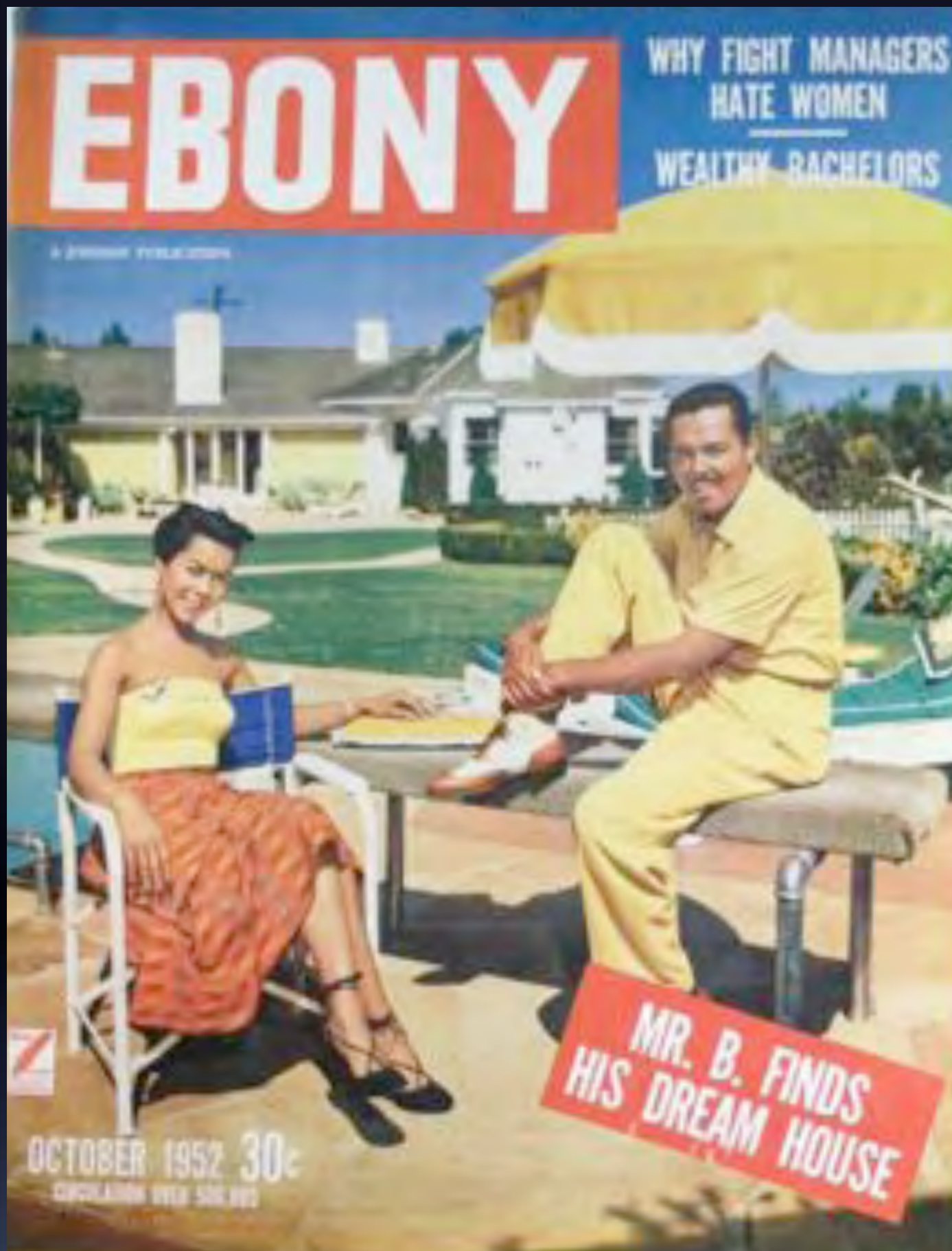
Seals & Crofts
Musicians



**Malietoa
Tanumafili II**
Late King of
Western Samoa

Other Bahá'í notables include:

- Queen Marie of Romania;
- Carole Lombard (Hollywood's highest-paid actress until her tragic plane crash in 1942);
- Seals & Crofts (popular musicians).
- Malietoa Tanumafili II (the late King of Western Samoa).



1952

Alain Locke
publicly identified
as a Baha'i
in popular culture.

Late in his life, Alain Locke was publicly identified as a Bahá'í in the October 1952 issue of Ebony Magazine. This is the cover. It features Billy Eckstine, considered the first romantic black male in popular music.

BAHA'I FAITH

Only church in world that does not discriminate

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

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

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

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

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

Evidence of the high level of integration in the Baha'i faith is the presence in the nine-member National Spiritual Assembly of two Negroes, Mrs. Elsie Austin, prominent Ohio attorney, and Matthew J. Back, one-time chairman of the Massachusetts Parole Board.

An example of how the Baha'is are practicing their interracial beliefs is the recent marriage (shown on the following pages) of attractive brown-skinned Betty Major and businessman, Swiss-born Roger Luder.

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



Spectacular \$4,000,000 Baha'i Temple in Wilmette, Ill., is one of most beautiful buildings in U.S.A. Swiss-born Roger Luder and pretty Betty Major are one of many interracial couples choosing membership in faith.

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

With 1939, Howard professor, joined movement in 1915, wrote for Baha'i Magazine.



Caption

"Alain Locke, Howard professor, joined movement in 1915, wrote for Baha'i Magazine."

The article in which Locke is featured as a Bahá'í is titled, "Bahá'í Faith: Only Church in World that Does Not Discriminate." Locke's photo appears opposite of Robert S. Abbott. The caption above Locke's photo reads: "Alain Locke, Howard professor, joined movement in 1915, wrote for Baha'i Magazine."



Original

Original photograph
of Alain Locke,
published in
Ebony Magazine.



Here's the original photograph of Alain Locke that appeared in Ebony Magazine, but in a cropped version. James Latimer Allen (pictured opposite Locke), an African American photographer who ran a portrait studio in New York during the 1920s and 1930s, took this photo, archived in the Alain Locke Papers.

**ALL RACES WELCOMED
AS BAHÁ'Í MEMBERS**

Baha'is are made up of all races, nationalities and religions. It was rather impressive today to see a Race friend who sat at a table with a Jew and a Catholic at the midday luncheon. Such sights are now so common that they cause not the slightest excitement. Among the prominent Colored Baha'is may be mentioned Dr. Alain Locke, Rhode's scholar and professor of philosophy of Howard university; Mrs. Coralle Franklin Cook,

1933

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162201 of bhjiosobp2. of HOW.812Q nu-
YJ8JH 10CKE' BHO6E2 2CJOJ2L 8JH2 BLO-
01GQ B2JH'2 W2L 2E W2GJH2H2Q 2L'
CJ2W2H2C. YJH2U2E 2JH2 BLOJ2H2G2H2C 2OJ-
2JH2 2JH2 2JH2 2JH2 2JH2 2JH2 2JH2 2JH2

In fact, Locke was publicly identified as a Bahá'í 19 years earlier, on page 10 of the June 17, 1933 edition of the Chicago Defender. This image is a small part of an article that fills much of an entire page. It states, in part: "Baha'is are made up of all races, nationalities and religions ... Among the prominent Colored Baha'is may be mentioned Dr. Alain Locke, Rhodes Scholar and professor of philosophy at Howard University."

Baha'i Movement Seen as Hope of Religion

West Side Attracts Early Chicagoan

James G. Gordon, Here Since 1881, Helps Develop Barren West Section Into Thriving Business Center

Editor's Note: Don't fail to read "Chicago Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." These articles will be found not only authentic but informative as well. They will cover a period of 50 years, dealing with various facts largely unknown by the general public.

By A. N. FIELDS
CHAPTER XXXVI

The state of Virginia, whose early history was devoted to the construction of the nation, has made a number of worthy contributions of men and women of value to our race. No other state of the Union has been so prolific, either in quality or numbers, in giving to the race characters as features in thought and no abstruse in purpose as those native of that state who left their environment in their early days to seek a freeman's opportunity in another land.

Virginia was early the source of many of our nation's great men. Washington, Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, Lee, and many others were born in that state. It was the source of many of our nation's great men. Washington, Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, Lee, and many others were born in that state.

It is a fact which is not generally known that James G. Gordon, who has lived in Chicago since 1881, has been a most successful business man in the West Side. He has helped to develop the West Side into a thriving business center.

ARRIVES IN CITY, SETTLES ON BARREN WEST SIDE

The young man who has been the source of many of our nation's great men is James G. Gordon. He has lived in Chicago since 1881 and has been a most successful business man in the West Side. He has helped to develop the West Side into a thriving business center.



New Philosophy Wipes Out All Prejudices Based on Race, Color and Creed

Wilmette Temple of Light a Thing of Surpassing Beauty

By LOUIS T. CROCKY

WILMETTE, Ill.—This beautiful village, a suburb of the great city of Chicago, brings annually together a gathering unique among the great assemblages of the earth. While the great busy world of dollars and cents, boats and traffic, business and pleasure, warlike preparation, speed and accident, heedlessness and indifference to all other material values is in full swing, a land of radiant ideas meets here in earnest realization about the state of the whole world.

They are the wings of the spirit above the world of men. They are the wings of the spirit above the world of men. They are the wings of the spirit above the world of men.

The building in which this gathering meets is a thing of surpassing beauty. It is a temple of light, a thing of surpassing beauty. It is a temple of light, a thing of surpassing beauty.

WITH 800-PIECE IOWA BAND



The Illinois band band-organist musical organization in the nation which played Tenney and Wednesday at a Century of Progress, brought to Chicago four young musicians of the band. They are, left to right, standing: James Peterson, first clarinet, and William Butler, first trumpet; seated, left to right: Harry B. Williams, first saxophone, and Murray Black, first trombone. Back in the row is Miss Margaretta Smith, band director, 1000 North Dearborn, Chicago. The band came here from Des Moines, Iowa.

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And the End Is Death!

By JULIUS J. ADAMS
One of the first lessons in journalism is that allusions and quotations should be used only sparingly in news stories. Good reporters follow this rule religiously except in feature articles when a timely saying from some one of the old masters may make a better opening than anything we moderns can conjure.

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STREETS OF PARIS
By EDGAR A. WIGGINS

This is the top part of page 10 as it appears in full, entitled: "Baha'i Movement Seen as Hope of Religion. New Philosophy Wipes Out All Prejudices Based on Race, Color and Creed."

“Racial Boundaries Disappear”

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

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

Author Louis Gregory, a former Washington, DC attorney and graduate of Howard University’s School of Law, writes:

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

“The Power to Unify Mankind”

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

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

Louis Gregory continues:

- **“Here each person must investigate and see the truth for himself.**
- **Here religion and science in their common origin support each other.**
- **Here is encouragement ... to speak one language.**
- **It [the Bahá’í Faith] has the power to unify mankind.”**

NY Times

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

1943

15 L -

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

MALARIA IS FOUGHT WITH SECRET DRUGS

Advance in Conquest Forecast to Military Surgeons in Use of New Remedies in Pacific

AIR AMBULANCES HAILED

90-Patient Craft to Fly Soon, Load of 400 Later—Doctors Face Draft Up to Age of 45

By WILLIAM L. LAURANCE

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 22—An army now being tested in the field, with results expected to bring about "improvements of incalculable value in the therapy of malaria." This was reported today by Brig. Gen. Charles Hillman, chief of the Division of Malaria Control, in the annual report of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States.

General Hillman also reported field experiments to develop more effective administration of the standard anti-malarial drugs. He added that among tropical diseases "this infection rank next in mortality as a cause of non-effectiveness in Pacific theaters."

Evacuation of 31,000 Wounded

Admiral William D. Leahy, per-

31 Chaplains to Preach at Services Here As Churches Celebrate a 'Navy Week-End'

"Navy Sunday" will be widely observed tomorrow in the churches and "Navy Sunday" today in the synagogues of this city and vicinity. Thirty-one Navy chaplains, several of them recently returned from duty abroad or home overseas, will preach in local churches and synagogues, and "exchanging pulpits," local clergymen will preach at seven Navy centers and one Coast Guard station.

Capt. William W. Edell, senior chaplain at the Naval Training Station, Sampson, N. Y., will preach tomorrow at 11 A. M. in St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 47th Avenue and 47th Street, and at the 4:30 o'clock service in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, at 47th Street and 5th Avenue.

Other speakers will include the Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Starnes, pastor of the Episcopal Church of St. Paul's, 11th Street and 5th Avenue, and the Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Starnes, pastor of the Episcopal Church of St. Paul's, 11th Street and 5th Avenue.



Capt. William W. Edell, the New York Times 21, 8, Navy

PARADE OF FLAGS TO MARK SERVICE

Problems of 40 Nations Will Be Carried in World Mission Meeting on Thursday

By RACHEL K. McEWELL

A procession to the altar of the flags of forty nations will be a feature of the mass meeting to open the Christian Mission of World Peace to be held Thursday at 12:15 P. M. in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. In the procession, which will move through the whole length of the cathedral, will march 1,000 persons, many of whom will wear costumes of their native lands. The service will close with a "Tea of the Nations" and the playing of the national anthems.

The meeting will be held under the auspices of the World Federation of Churches of this area. Speakers will include John Foster Dulles, chairman of the Commission of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America to study the Peace of a Just and Durable Peace; Business Week, former Under-Secretary of State, and United States Senator Joseph H. Ball of Minnesota. Other participants will be the Right Rev. Henry H. George Parker, Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church and president of the mission, and the Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Starnes, pastor of the Episcopal Church of St. Paul's, who is president of the Greater New York Federation of Churches.

Problems of 40 Nations Will Be Carried in World Mission Meeting on Thursday

Problems of 40 nations will be carried in the work of the multiple World Mission.

Problems of 40 nations will be carried in the work of the multiple World Mission. The Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Starnes, pastor of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Washington, D. C., will be the main speaker. Other speakers will be the Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson, president of the United Methodist Board of Christian Education in New York; the Rev. Dr. Morris Ford Martin, president of the Episcopal Conference in New York; the Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Starnes, president of the New York Conference of the Synod.

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RELIGIOUS SERVICES

BAHA'I FAITH 119 W. 57th St. 6th Floor. Healing Christ MANSJATTAN OPERA HOUSE. TRINITY CHURCH. AMILLA CHURCH.

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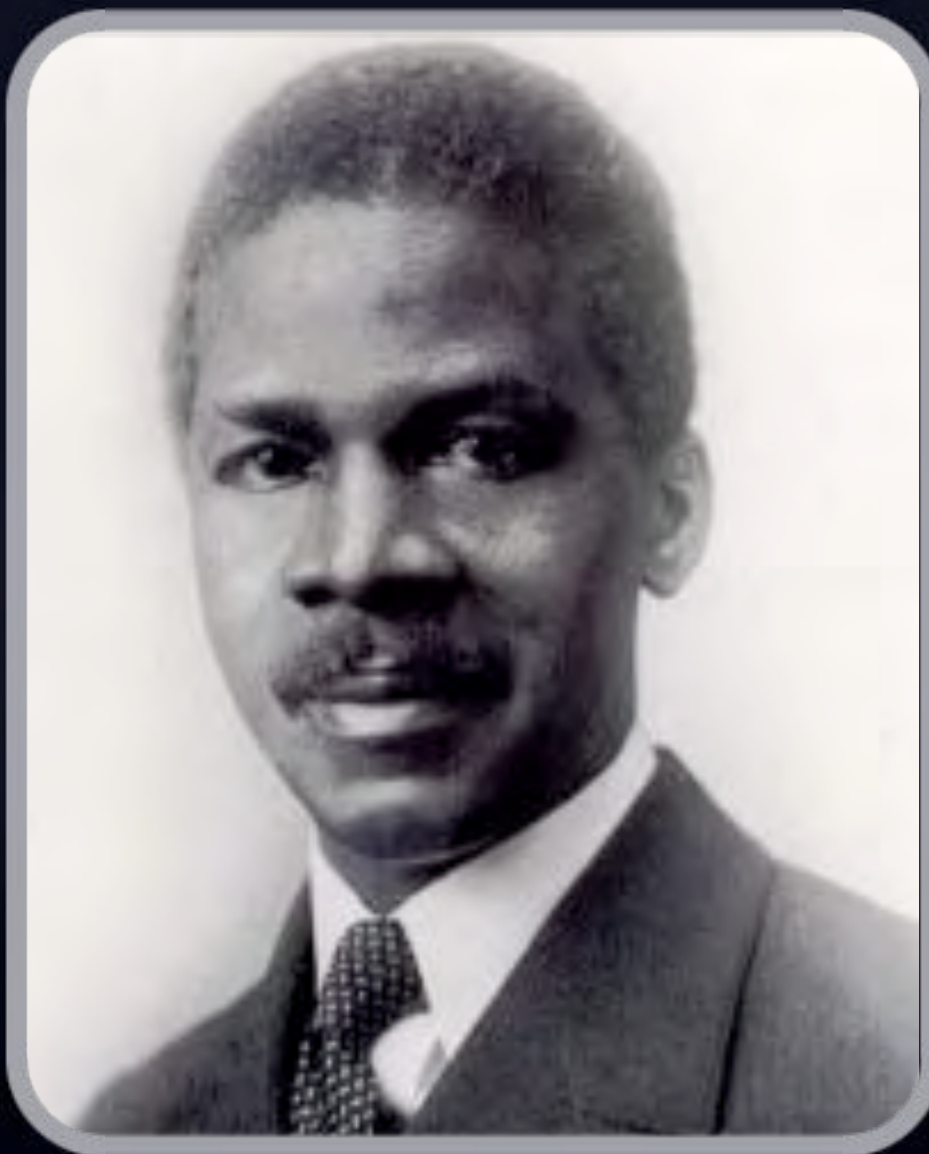
Another example of Alain Locke's public association with the Bahá'í Faith—although infrequent—appears in this tiny announcement under "Religious Services" in the New York Times on October 23, 1943. The announcement features Locke's name twice under "Baha'i Faith": First: "Speakers: DR. HARRY OVERSTREET, DR. ALAIN LOCKE." And next: "4:15 P.M.—Dr. Locke, "World Ultimatum."

Birth of Race Amity

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Agnes Parsons
Washington, DC



Louis G. Gregory
Washington, DC



Dr. Alain Locke
Washington, DC

1
9
2
1

The first Race Amity conference was organized by Agnes S. Parsons (a wealthy white woman prominent in Washington, D.C. society) at the instruction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. During her second pilgrimage to Haifa (1920), he had said to her: "I want you to arrange in Washington a convention for unity between the white and colored people." For assistance in planning this event she called upon Louis Gregory and Alain Locke, pictured here beside her.

1921

First Race Amity Conference



- Held in Old First Congregational Church, 10th & G, NW.
- Estimated 1500 attended.
- Locke served as Session Chair on Friday evening, May 21.
- Howard University chorus performed.
- Solo violinist Joseph Douglass, grandson of abolitionist, Frederick

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

- **The first “Race Amity” convention was held in Old First Congregational Church, 10th & G, NW.**
- **An estimated 1500 attended.**
- **Locke served as Session Chair on Friday evening, May 21.**
- **The Howard University chorus performed.**
- **And solo violinist Joseph Douglass, grandson of abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, performed as well.**

1921



- **Central High School Auditorium.**
- **Springfield, Massachusetts.**
- **5–6 December 1921.**
- **Estimated 1200 attended.**

Locke served on several Bahá'í race amity committees and took part in race amity conferences and other Bahá'í-sponsored events. The first four race amity conventions were held in: (1) Washington, D.C. (in May 1921); (2) Springfield, Massachusetts (in December 1921); (3) New York (in March 1924); and (4) Philadelphia (in October 1924). Locke participated in all but the second (pictured above, where 1200 attended), yet was involved in the planning and execution of these events as well.

Inter-Racial Amity Children's Hour



New York, April 29, 1928

Here is a remarkable photograph of the “Inter-racial Amity Children’s Hour,” taken April 29, 1928. I cannot say if Locke had anything directly to do with this particular event. But he was certainly part of the genesis of the movement that made these other “Race Amity” events possible.

Race Amity Committees

1924

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

1932

Beginning with the task force that organized the first “Race Amity” convention, Locke served on race amity committees from 1924 until 1932. There are records of Locke having spoken at Bahá'í-sponsored events from 1921 to 1952—a period spanning thirty-one years.

Bahá'í Essays & Speeches

1921

- 1. **Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races—Based on Heavenly Teachings (1921)**
- 2. **The Gospel for the Twentieth Century (1923)**
- 3. **Impressions of Haifa (1924)**
- 4. **Negro Art and Culture (1924)**
- 5. **America's Part in World Peace (1925)**
- 6. **Cultural Reciprocity (1927)**
- 7. **A Bahá'í Inter-Racial Conference (1928)**
- 8. **Advice to Shoghi Effendi on the Iqan Translation (1930)**
- 9. **Educator and Publicist (1931)**
- 10. **Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle (1933)**
- 11. **The Orientation of Hope (1936)**
- 12. **Lessons in World Crisis (1945)**

1945

Locke authored a dozen or so Bahá'í essays and speeches. Of these, four were published in volumes of The Bahá'í World, considered the most important Bahá'í publications next to translations of the Bahá'í sacred Writings.

Lecture Tour of South

1925

- On June 15, 1925, Locke was fired for his support of equitable faculty pay.
- Between February 6 and March 1926, Locke traveled with Louis Gregory on a Baha'i lecture tour:
 - Cleveland and Cincinnati (Ohio)
 - Dunbar Forum at Oberlin College (Ohio)
 - Wilberforce University (Ohio)
 - Daytona Normal & Industrial Institute for Negro Girls (Daytona, Florida)
 - Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School (Orlando, Florida).

1926

On June 15, 1925, Locke was fired for his support of equal pay between black and white faculty. Shortly after The New Negro was published in December 1925, between February 6 and March 1926, Locke traveled with Louis Gregory on a Baha'i lecture tour, which took him to Cleveland and Cincinnati; Dunbar Forum at Oberlin College; Wilberforce University (all in Ohio); Daytona Normal & Industrial Institute for Negro Girls; Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School (Orlando).

Lecture Tour of Ohio & Florida

1926

- **“In regard to Dr. Locke—he is at present in N.Y. but has written me saying he ‘will keep his promise (to go South) in spite of many things.’**
- **When he looked over the list of educators supplied by Mrs. Kehler, saying he knew about one third of them personally, he remarked smilingly[,] ‘How surprised they will be to know me as a Bahai’**
- **Dr. Locke does not attend Bahai meetings in Washington, but is deeply and truly a Bahai.”**
- **Louise Boyle, undated letter [late 1925] to Mrs. El Fleda Spaulding.**

In a letter in late 1925 in advance of this tour, a fellow Bahá'í wrote: “In regard to Dr. Locke—he is at present in N.Y. but has written me saying he ‘will keep his promise (to go South) in spite of many things.’ ... When he looked over the list of educators supplied by Mrs. Kehler, saying he knew about one third of them personally, he remarked smilingly[,] ‘How surprised they will be to know me as a Bahai.’ ... Dr. Locke does not attend Bahai meetings in Washington, but is deeply and truly a Bahai.

Washington, D.C. Bahá'í Community




32

Here is a historic photograph of the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community, taken around 1936. Note that it is well-integrated—again, in striking contrast to the racially segregated society that prevailed in that era. Noticeably absent, however, is Locke himself. But his name does appear in at least twenty membership lists, from March 1922 to 1951, showing a Bahá'í affiliation of at least 30 consecutive years, or thirty-four years dating back to 1918, and 37 years until his death in 1954.

**Special Issue:
Alain Locke
World Order
(2005)**

2005 VOLUME 34, NUMBER 3

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by Alain Locke

One of these Bahá'í essays, "The Gospel for the Twentieth Century," was published in the 2005 special Alain Locke issue of World Order magazine, the cover of which you see here, along with three other unpublished works I found in the Alain Locke Papers. In this way, more about Locke's Bahá'í identity, along with his philosophy on world democracy, is coming to light.

Need for Race Unity



- If they will but see it, because of their complementary qualities, the two racial groups (Black & White) have great spiritual need, one of the other.
- Alain Locke
The Negro in America (1933) 50.

- In a nutshell, this inspiring quote represents Locke's Bahá'í ideal of "race amity":
- "If they will but see it, because of their complementary qualities, the two racial groups [Black & White] have great spiritual need, one of the other."
- (Alain Locke, *The Negro in America* (1933) 50.)
- I'll end this presentation with an audio sound recording of Alain Locke made in 1940.

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



1940

[Play audio!]

Finis

Thank you!