

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

January 3, 2011

To the American Bahá'í community

Dearest Bahá'í Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly understands that homosexuality is a subject of particular interest and concern to many in this country and is, therefore, moved to share with you a letter dated October 27, 2010, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice on this topic. A copy of the letter—addressed to an American Bahá'í—was received by our Assembly, and the Supreme Body has kindly granted us permission to share it with you:

...With respect to your question concerning the position Bahá'ís are to take regarding homosexuality and civil rights, we have been asked to convey the following.

The purpose of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is the realization of the organic unity of the entire human race, and Bahá'ís are enjoined to eliminate from their lives all forms of prejudice and to manifest respect towards all. Therefore, to regard those with a homosexual orientation with prejudice or disdain would be against the spirit of the Faith. Furthermore, a Bahá'í is exhorted to be “an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression”, and it would be entirely appropriate for a believer to come to the defense of those whose fundamental rights are being denied or violated.

At the same time, you are no doubt aware of the relevant teachings of the Faith that govern the personal conduct of Bahá'ís. The Bahá'í Writings state that marriage is a union between a man and a woman and that sexual relations are restricted to a couple who are married to each other. Other passages from the Writings state that the practice of homosexuality is not permitted. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh on personal morality are binding on Bahá'ís, who strive, as best they can, to live up to the high standards He has established.

In attempting to reconcile what may appear to be conflicting obligations, it is important to understand that the Bahá'í community does not seek to impose its values on others, nor does it pass judgment on others on the basis of its own moral standards. It does not see itself as one among competing social groups and organizations, each vying to establish its particular social agenda. In working for social justice, Bahá'ís must inevitably distinguish

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between those dimensions of public issues that are in keeping with the Bahá'í Teachings, which they can actively support, and those that are not, which they would neither promote nor necessarily oppose. In connection with issues of concern to homosexuals, the former would be freedom from discrimination and the latter the opportunity for civil marriage. Such distinctions are unavoidable when addressing any social issue. For example, Bahá'ís actively work for the establishment of world peace but, in the process, do not engage in partisan political activities directed against particular governments.

We felt it important that the friends have access to this guidance from the House of Justice, and trust that you will find it helpful.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Kenneth E. Bowers  
Secretary