

SUMMER SCHOOL STUDY GUIDE

Welcome to the 2021 Colorado East Baha’i School! We invite you to join our collective study as individuals or in your own small groups (we suggest utilizing the time already set aside for your Ruhi study circle or devotional). *[A companion guide for Junior Youth and children’s class groups, or family study, is available [here](#).]*

This study guide is formatted in the style of a Ruhi Course, intended to be studied over the course of four weeks (feel free to alter the schedule to best fit your group). We will be reading and discussing the [22nd July 2020 letter from the Universal House of Justice, exploring stories of ‘Abdu’l-Baha](#), and reflecting together using the arts.

Stories: Each week includes a story of ‘Abdu’l-Baha and his race amity work in America. You are encouraged to explore other stories of the Master for further study and reflection. We invite you to explore story-telling, drama, music or visual arts each week in connection with these stories.

Share-back: We encourage you or your group to prepare a short (1-5 minute) presentation to (a) share a story of ‘Abdu’l-Baha that resonated with you/your group; and/or (b) share your learnings and action steps you endeavor to undertake. The nature of this sharing can take many forms, be creative!

- Drama, story-telling, music and the visual arts are encouraged. It can be reflective, fun and/or interactive in nature!
- Consider signing up for the Celebration day on Sept. 25th! This is an opportunity to share your art, story, drama, music, and/or learnings with all School participants via a “community visit”.
 - You may gather in-person and join the virtual program, or you may join virtual-only.
 - Drama reminder: Manifestations of God and the Master are [not to be directly portrayed on stage](#).
- Pre-recorded videos are encouraged. Please email a link to download your video presentation to: coloradoeast@nbs.usbnc.org.

Note: The format is intended to allow for flexibility to adapt to the needs of your group. We understand not all groups will complete each suggested activity, or may not make it through all materials. Participation in the share-back portion is an important aspect and we encourage you to work on this throughout all 4 weeks of study.

Recommendation: If your group has not recently read the [22 July 2020 message](#), we suggest reading it in its entirety before diving into the Week 1 content.

Craft Supply List (optional):

Colored paper	Scissors	Glue	Mod Podge glue	Glass jars
Tissue paper	Tea light candles (battery operated okay)		Colored pencils/markers/Sharpies	

WEEK ONE

Suggested prayer: "O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord." (*Baha'u'llah*)

Suggested music: ['Abdu'l-Baha - Music Inspired by the Heroes Teaching Conference](#) (5:23)

Read paragraphs 1 & 2 and discuss the prompts:

“A moment of historic portent has arrived for your nation as the conscience of its citizenry has stirred, creating possibilities for marked social change. It holds significance not only for the destiny of America anticipated in the Sacred Writings, but also for the mission entrusted to your community by the hand of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who cherished you dearly and called you to a path of sacrifice and high endeavor. We are pleased to see that, led by your National and Local Spiritual Assemblies, you are seizing opportunities—whether those thrust upon you by current circumstances or those derived from your systematic labors in the wider society—to play your part, however humble, in the effort to remedy the ills of your nation. We ardently pray that the American people will grasp the possibilities of this moment to create a consequential reform of the social order that will free it from the pernicious effects of racial prejudice and will hasten the attainment of a just, diverse, and united society that can increasingly manifest the oneness of the human family.

Sadly, however, your nation’s history reveals that any significant progress toward racial equality has invariably been met by countervailing processes, overt or covert, that served to undermine the advances achieved and to reconstitute the forces of oppression by other means. Thus, whatever the immediate outcome of contemporary events, you need not be deterred, for you are cognizant of the “long and thorny road, beset with pitfalls” described by the Guardian that still lies ahead. Your commitment to tread this road with determination and insight, drawing upon what you have learned in recent years about translating Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings into reality, will have to be sustained until the time, anticipated by Shoghi Effendi, when you will have contributed your decisive share to the eradication of racial prejudice from the fabric of your nation.”

1) How can we contribute our share to the “eradication of racial prejudice” and remain vigilant despite “countervailing processes” that “undermine the advances achieved”?

2) Read [Day 14 “Breaking the Color Line” from 239days.com](#).

And/or [view a theatrical version of the story here](#) (timestamp 8:08 to 16:16).

How does this story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inspire you to attack the social conventions of today?

Suggested Art Activity: Unite the Hearts

- Draw 2 heart outlines on paper, one inside the other. Cut out both lines to get an open heart.
- Repeat at least once (more if you’d like), in different sizes and colors.
- Intertwine two or more hearts together by cutting a line through one heart’s edge (to wrap it around another).
- Glue or tape your creation on paper, add additional decorations.
- Add the quote “Unite the hearts of Thy servants.”
- Don’t forget to take photos and [share with the Summer School team!](#)



WEEK TWO

Suggested quote: "We ... would hope that the people ... may be guided by the blessed words: 'Say: all things are of God.' This exalted utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true unity." (*Bahá'u'lláh*)

Suggested music: [The Photograph](#) (5:23)

Read paragraph 3 and discuss the prompts:

“The principles and exhortations that guide your steps are well known to you from the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. The concepts and approaches for social transformation developed in the current series of Plans that can be utilized to promote race unity in the context of community building, social action, and involvement in the discourses of society have been set out in our messages. Every believer, as the promulgator of Bahá’u’lláh’s central principle of the oneness of humanity, should deeply meditate upon it and weigh its demanding implications for the profound alteration of thought and action required at this time. “The American Bahá’í Community, the leaven destined to leaven the whole,” the Guardian admonished, cannot hope “to either escape the trials with which this nation is confronted, nor claim to be wholly immune from the evils that stain its character.” “A tremendous effort is required by both races if their outlook, their manners, and conduct are to reflect, in this darkened age, the spirit and teachings of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh,” he also stated. “Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved.” “Each one should endeavor to develop and assist the other toward mutual advancement,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained. “Love and unity will be fostered between you, thereby bringing about the oneness of mankind.”

- 1) What are the “demanding implications for the profound alteration of thought and action required at this time” and how can we support each other in this “tremendous effort”?

2) Read [Day 26 “The Ultimate Taboo” from 239days.com](#).

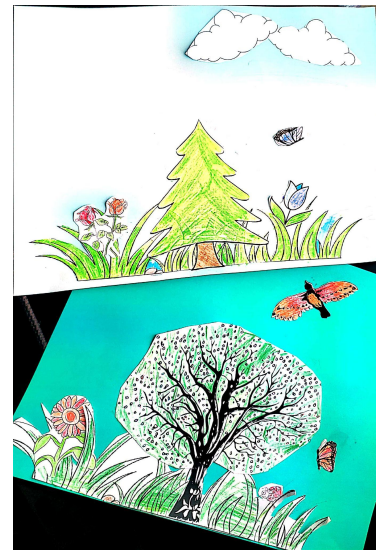
In what ways does this story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inspire you to recast the current entrenched language around race?

Suggested Art Activity: Garden of Change

Each person should [print out this garden template](#).

In-person

- Start with the grass (page 1). How does this garden look? How would it be if our gardens were all the same?
- Everyone add only one (1) item to their picture. (use clipart, draw, etc.)
- Pass the papers to the left - now add one item to that picture. Continue in this manner until the group agrees the gardens are finished.
- Share the creations and discuss:
 - How are the gardens the same? Different?
 - How did they come to be?
 - How did they come to be? How did small changes make a big impact?
 - What role does a gardener play? How does this relate to our work in race amity?



Virtual

- Start with the grass only (page 1). How does this garden look? How would it be if our gardens were all the same?
- Everyone create their garden. Use the attached clipart, draw your own, be creative!
- Share your creations with each other and discuss:
 - How are the gardens the same? Different?
 - How did they come to be?
 - How did small changes make a big impact?
 - What role does a gardener play? How does this relate to our work in race amity?

Don't forget to take photos and [share with the Summer School team!](#)

WEEK THREE

Suggested prayer: "O Lord! Unite and bind together the hearts, join in accord all the souls, and exhilarate the spirits through the signs of Thy sanctity and oneness. O Lord! Make these faces radiant through the light of Thy oneness. Strengthen the loins of Thy servants in the service of Thy kingdom."
 ('Abdu'l-Bahá)

Suggested music: ['Abdu'l-Baha, "Everlasting Glory"](#) (Farsi & English) (6:00)

Read paragraph 4 and discuss the prompts:

“Racism is a profound deviation from the standard of true morality. It deprives a portion of humanity of the opportunity to cultivate and express the full range of their capability and to live a meaningful and flourishing life, while blighting the progress of the rest of humankind. It cannot be rooted out by contest and conflict. 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. Within the context of the framework governing your activities, it is necessary to carefully examine the forces unfolding around you to determine where your energies might reinforce the most promising initiatives, what you should avoid, and how you might lend a distinctive contribution. 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.”

1) How do we identify what to “reinforce”, what to “avoid” and where to make a “contribution” while maintaining unity?

2) Read [Day 225 “Jim Crow Comes to Dinner” from 239days.com](#).

[View a video version of the story here (timestamp 1:48 – 3:58).]

In what ways does this story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inspire ideas on how to remedy unjust situations you might come across today?

Suggested Art Activity: The Lighthouse

“The light of truth kindled in your hearts will shine out to the distant horizon!” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá)

- Each person needs a jar (with or without lid)
- Using Mod Podge glue (or similar), add tissue paper pieces to the jar (layer of glue, place paper on top, then add another layer of glue over the paper.
- Work in layers of paper until you like the result. Finish with a thin layer of glue over all tissue paper. Let dry.
- Add a tea light candle (or battery-operated) inside.



Discussion Guide:

- What does having “the light of truth” in our hearts look like?
- How is telling the truth like a light or lighthouse?
- How can you be respectful when people share their truth & experience with racism and prejudice?

WEEK FOUR

Suggested quote: "O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes."
(*Bahá'u'lláh*)

Suggested music: [Where There is Love](#) (2:56)

Read paragraphs 5 and 6 and discuss the prompts:

“Ultimately, the power to transform the world is effected by love, love originating from the relationship with the divine, love ablaze among members of a community, love extended without restriction to every human being. This divine love, ignited by the Word of God, is disseminated by enkindled souls through intimate conversations that create new susceptibilities in human hearts, open minds to moral persuasion, and loosen the hold of biased norms and social systems so that they can gradually take on a new form in keeping with the requirements of humanity’s age of maturity. You are channels for this divine love; let it flow through you to all who cross your path. Infuse it into every neighborhood and social space in which you move to build capacity to canalize the society-building power of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. There can be no rest until the destined outcome is achieved.

Ahead of you lie times of trial and promise, of hardship and progress, of anguish and joy. Under all conditions, the Master is your solace and support. For those who aspire to lasting change, His example guides the way—tactful and wise in His approach, penetrating in utterance, indiscriminating in fellowship, unfailing in sympathy for the downtrodden, courageous in conduct, persevering in action, imperturbable in the face of tests, unwavering in His keen sense of justice. And to all who arise to emulate Him, He offers this unfailing assurance: “that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed.”

1) How do we become channels of divine love holding “intimate conversations that create new susceptibilities in human hearts, open minds to moral persuasion, and loosen the hold of biased norms and social systems”?

2) Think of other stories of ‘Abdu’l-Baha you’ve heard or have read together the past few weeks. Which story most inspired you? What efforts can we make in our daily life or implement in our community towards race unity?

SHARE-BACK

We invite you to share a story of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, OR an insight or learning from this program, in an artistic manner. Videos and photos of your creations are encouraged. We invite you to also present your creation(s) live (virtual and/or in person) during our Sept 25th celebration by signing up for a “Community Visit” slot. You could also share at an upcoming Feast or Cluster Reflection Meeting!

- Choose a story of ‘Abdu’l-Baha (can be any story you love!).
Or choose a quote that inspired you.
Or choose a lesson learned or an action you will take in your community.
- Decide how you will present this. Some examples:
 - Tell/narrate the story while incorporating photos, artwork, or a storybook.
 - Perform a short skit or drama of the story. *Drama reminder: Manifestations of God and the Master are not to be directly portrayed on stage.*
 - Narrate a story while creating a living statue showing the scene.
 - Compose a song, rap or spoken word based on a story or quote.
 - Create an art piece showing the story or quote.
 - Create a skit showing racial injustices and how to use ‘Abdu'l-Baha's example to correct them.
- Create, practice, then record it on video if you can! Please send videos & photos by September 23rd to coloradoeast@nbs.usbnc.org.