

Association for Bahá'í Studies–North America
37th Annual Conference
“Learning in Action: Scholarship and the Generation of Knowledge”

15 - 18 August 2013
Hyatt Regency Irvine
Irvine, California, USA

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Important Information

Conference Badge Your conference badge is your “ticket of admission” to all sessions. You must wear it to attend conference sessions. The security personnel will not allow admittance to anyone without a badge.

Security The security and usher volunteers at the conference are there to assist you. Please follow their instructions at all times. They can be identified by red ribbons on their badges.

Promptness The schedule of sessions is very full. To give equal time to the speakers, the sessions must begin on time. We request your cooperation in arriving promptly.

Cell Phones The ringing of mobile telephones in the audience is very disruptive to a presentation. Please turn off your cell phone or put it in “silent” mode while you are in the conference sessions.

The Children's and Junior Youth Program. (Children must be preregistered to attend.)
The Children and Junior Youth Program for ages 5 to 15, is being held in the **Turtle Rock rooms** on the 2nd floor. Parents may drop off children at their program 15 minutes before the adult session starting time. Parents are asked to pick up their children promptly at the close of each session and for the lunch breaks. (Meals are not included in the children's program.) The times for Children/Junior Youth sessions are

Thursday, 15 August 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Friday, 16 August 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, 17 August 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, 18 August 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Parents are required to sign a Medical Information and Emergency Health Care Release form and return it to the Children's Program coordinators.

The Conference Bookstore is operated by the Bahá'í Distribution Service in the United States. The bookstore is located in the **Crystal Cove** Room on the 1st floor and offers a wide selection of books and materials, including books and CDs by authors and artists presenting at the conference, and Bahá'í jewellery. Hours of operation are

Thursday, 15 August 2:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Friday, 16 August 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, 17 August 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, 18 August 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Evaluation Forms The ABS Executive Committee asks for your assistance and cooperation in filling out the conference evaluation forms provided in your conference kit. Your feedback is very valuable to us in our continuing efforts to improve the Conference.

Audio Recordings Conference plenary sessions will be recorded and will be available for purchase on one audio CD. An order form is included in your conference kit and additional forms are available at the Conference Information Desk. Please fill out the form with your credit card number and the order will be mailed to you after the conference.

Lost and Found Lost and found articles should be reported to the Conference Registration Table. After the close of the conference, any items not picked up will be turned over to the hotel.

Prayer Room The **Cabana Boardroom**, located across the pool, has been set aside for prayer and meditation from Thursday to Saturday, 8:00 a.m.– 8:00 p.m.

Evening Arts After the evening programs there will be an extended arts programme held in the **Grand Ballroom** where conference attendees can socialize and enjoy listening to live music until midnight. Performing artists at the conference are encouraged to sign up to perform at these events. A sign-up sheet will be available near the Conference Registration Table.

Networking Session: A networking session has been organized over lunch on Friday, August 16, from 12:00 – 1:45 pm in the **Garden Pavilion**. (Pick up your lunch and join the group.) Information tables will be set up where conference participants are invited to visit and connect with others in their field of interest, exchange contact information and share research interests to explore opportunities for collaboration and networking. Tables are set up by topics for the various Special Interest Groups of the Association as well as others who may have want to network on topics other than the specific SIG themes.

Association Endowment Funds: These funds are established by individuals to support and encourage Bahá'í Scholarship initiatives. If you wish to explore opportunities to contribute to these funds and support the goals of the Association, please feel free to consult with the treasurer of the Executive Committee, Dr. Mehran Kiai, at the conference.

Theme Statement

“Learning in Action: Scholarship and the Generation of Knowledge”

The Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. (June 1933, from a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the High Commissioner for Palestine)

Bahá'í scholarship, as explained by the Universal House of Justice, encompasses a “wide range of approaches and endeavors,” in every field. The 2013 conference will focus on the nexus between learning and action – how Bahá'í scholarship underlies and contributes to the process of social and cultural transformation described by the House of Justice in its Ridván Message of 2010:

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is vast. It calls for profound change not only at the level of the individual but also in the structure of society. . . . There are no shortcuts, no formulas. Only as effort is made to draw on insights from His Revelation, to tap into the accumulating knowledge of the human race, to apply His teachings intelligently to the life of humanity, and to consult on the questions that arise will the necessary learning occur and capacity be developed. (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010, para. 25)

Knowledge is central to social existence. Every human being has the right to access to knowledge and to participation in its generation, application and diffusion:

Though conditions will vary from country to country, and perhaps from cluster to cluster, eliciting from the friends a variety of endeavours, there are certain fundamental concepts that all should bear in mind. One is the centrality of knowledge to social existence. The perpetuation of ignorance is a most grievous form of oppression; it reinforces the many walls of prejudice that stand as barriers to the realization of the oneness of humankind, at once the goal and operating principle of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. Access to knowledge is the right of every human being, and participation in its generation, application and diffusion a responsibility that all must shoulder in the great enterprise of building a prosperous world civilization--each individual according to his or her talents and abilities. Justice demands universal participation. (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010, para. 29)

How is this perpetual process of generating and applying knowledge for the betterment of the world carried out? What does it look like at local, national, or international levels? What is the Bahá'í community learning about this? The Association for Bahá'í Studies invites all those engaged in such generation, application and diffusion of knowledge – from every field of endeavor and using diverse approaches – to analyze and explore what they have learned so far at its 37th Annual Conference.

APPENDIX OF QUOTATIONS

Those considering submitting proposals for the conference are encouraged to refresh their understanding of the guidance below, and more generally of the documents from which the selections below are drawn.

The Cause needs more Bahá'í scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer, 21 October 1943, reprinted in compilation on *Scholarship*, no. 13)

Over the decades, the Bahá'í community has gained much experience in these two areas of endeavour [social action and participation in the prevalent discourses of society]. There are, of course, a great many Bahá'ís who are engaged as individuals in social action and public discourse through their occupations. A number of non-governmental organizations, inspired by the teachings of the Faith and operating at the regional and national levels, are working in the field of social and economic development for the betterment of their people. Agencies of National Spiritual Assemblies are contributing through various avenues to the promotion of ideas conducive to public welfare. At the international level, agencies such as the United Nations Office of the Bahá'í International Community are performing a similar function. To the extent necessary and desirable, the friends working at the grassroots of the community will draw on this experience and capacity as they strive to address the concerns of the society around them. (The Universal House of Justice, *Ridván Message 2010*, para. 28)

To read the writings of the Faith and to strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's stupendous Revelation are obligations laid on every one of His followers. All are enjoined to delve into the ocean of His Revelation and to partake, in keeping with their capacities and inclinations, of the pearls of wisdom that lie therein. In this light, local deepening classes, winter and summer schools, and specially arranged gatherings in which individual believers knowledgeable in the writings were able to share with others insights into specific subjects emerged naturally as prominent features of Baha'i life. Just as the habit of daily reading will remain an integral part of Bahá'í identity, so will these forms of study continue to hold a place in the collective life of the community. But understanding the implications of the Revelation, both in terms of individual growth and social progress, increases manifold when study and service are joined and carried out concurrently. There, in the field of service, knowledge is tested, questions arise out of practice, and new levels of understanding are achieved. (Ibid., para. 9)

Effective social action serves to enrich participation in the discourses of society, just as the insights gained from engaging in certain discourses can help to clarify the concepts that shape social action. At the level of the cluster, involvement in public discourse can range from an act as simple as introducing Baha'i ideas into everyday conversation to more formal activities such as the preparation of articles and attendance

at gatherings, dedicated to themes of social concern--climate change and the environment, governance and human rights, to mention a few. It entails, as well, meaningful interactions with civic groups and local organizations in villages and neighbourhoods. (Ibid., para. 30)

Other elements that speak to the nature of social action are derived from a particular perspective on the role of knowledge in the development of society. The complementarity of science and religion, the imperative of spiritual and material education, the influence of values inherent to technology on the organization of society, and the relevance of appropriate technology to social progress are among the issues involved. Views related to the generation and application of knowledge have implications not only for the nature of development but also for the question of methodology, which is the theme of Section IV. (Office of Social and Economic Development, Statement on Social Action, November 26, 2012, Sec. II, para. 5)

Further involvement in the life of society should not be sought prematurely. It will proceed naturally as the friends in every cluster persevere in applying the provisions of the Plan through a process of action, reflection, consultation and study, and learn as a result. Involvement in the life of society will flourish as the capacity of the community to promote its own growth and to maintain its vitality is gradually raised. It will achieve coherence with efforts to expand and consolidate the community to the extent that it draws on elements of the conceptual framework which governs the current series of global Plans. And it will contribute to the movement of populations towards Baha'u'llah's vision of a prosperous and peaceful world civilization to the degree that it employs these elements creatively in new areas of learning. (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010, para. 32)

Thursday, 15 August 2013

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Special Simultaneous Workshop Sessions

Trabuco A/B/C

9:00 – 12:00 **Faculty and Student Workshop**

Convener: PIERRE-YVES MOCQUAIS, Academic Director, Association for Bahá'í Studies

Garden Pavilion

10:00 – 12:00 **What is Bahá'í Scholarship?**

Facilitators: KIM NAQVI and MATTHEW WEINBERG

12:00 – 2:00 *Lunch Break*

Garden Pavilion

2:00 – 4:00 **Insights from the Frontiers of Learning**

Facilitators: MOJGAN SAMI and POONEH KHAZEI

Trabuco A/B/C

2:00 – 3:15

Emotional Intelligence / Relationship and Long Obligatory Prayer KEYVAN GEULA

3:30 – 5:00

Knowledge Generation by Youth Working in Clusters FARZIN AGHDASI

Saddleback

3:00 – 5:00

What is Bahá'í Scholarship?

Facilitators: KIM NAQVI and MATTHEW WEINBERG

5:00 – 7:00

Dinner Break

Thursday Evening

Grand Ballroom

7:00

Plenary Session

Chair: KIM NAQVI

Devotions

Official Conference Welcome

Representatives of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada

The Ocean of Revelation: Dynamic Source of All Learning HOOPER DUNBAR

Grand Ballroom

9:30

Evening Arts Programme

The late evening Arts programme is one of many options open to the conference participants, and features planned and open-mic contributions.

Friday, 16 August 2013

Grand Ballroom

9:00 **Plenary Session**
Chair: KAREN MCKYE

Devotions

What Are Bahá'ís Learning from Working in Fragile War-Torn States?

ANDY TAMAS and VASU MOHAN

Reading, Analyzing and Transforming Reality through Participatory Research

SHABNAM KOIRALA-AZAD

Artistic Presentation JAMEY HEATH and NATASHA HUGGER

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and Academic Discourse HODA MAHMOUDI

12:00 – 2:00 *Lunch Break*

*Please note that there is a **SIG networking session** from 12:00 – 1:45 pm in the **Garden Pavilion**. Those interested can pick up their lunch and join the group.*

2:00 - 5:30 p.m. Simultaneous Breakout Sessions

Oak Creek

Arts I

Convener and Chair: ANNE GORDON PERRY

2:00 – 3:00 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Western Journey: What Have We Learned? Where Do We Take It from Here? ANNE GORDON PERRY

3:15 – 4:15 Awakening: The Birth and Tribulations of a Bahá'í Community in Iran
HUSSEIN AHDIEH

Oak Creek

Bahá'í History & Biography

Chair: ANNE GORDON PERRY

4:30 – 5:30 Igniting Young Hearts: Writing Bahá'í Youth Fiction CINDY SAVAGE

Shady Canyon

Bahá'í Medical Association of Canada Networking Meeting

2:00 – 3:00 Networking meeting PAYAM SAZEGAR

Trabuco

Bioethics and Health Sciences

Convener and Chair: ELIZABETH L. BOWEN

4:30 – 5:30 Food of the Future - Nutrition from a Bahá'í Perspective BAHAR BROCKEN

- Salon B* **Communications**
 Convener and Chair: AMROLLAH HEMMAT
- 2:00 – 3:00 Watch, Like, Share: How YouTube is Advancing Mankind
 SHABNAM MOGHARABI and DEVON GUNDRY
- 3:15 – 4:15 Tacit Knowledge and Shared Belief: Where’s the Communicating Self?
 DEBORAH VANCE
- 4:30 – 5:30 Mass Media and Our Perception of Truth: The Far-Reaching Consequences
 NAVA MELODY GHALILI
- Garden Pavilion* **Education**
 4:30 – 5:30 Forget your own selves... Bend your energies to... the education of men
 ALEX MAZLOOM
- Woodbridge* **Gender and Equality Studies**
 4:30 – 5:30 Chicana Feminism and the Faith: Learning from Diverse Philosophies
 NAZANIN M. HEYDARIAN
- Saddleback* **Human and Natural Environment**
 Convener and Chair: JOHN STEERE
- 4:30 – 5:30 Blessed is the Spot: Pilgrimage and Sacred Place as Catalysts for the Evolution of
 Character Towards Personal Transformation
 JOHN STEERE and MICHELLE THELEN-STEERE
- Garden Pavilion* **Human Rights, Race and Culture**
 2:00 – 3:00 Soul 2.0: Introducing Spiritual Identity into Social Media Discourse
 SAHAR D. SATTARZADEH
- 3:15 – 4:15 Knowing Nobility: Slavery and Misrecognition ZHALEH BOYD
- Trabuco* **Marriage and Family**
 Chair: BRENDA MAXWELL
- 2:00 – 3:00 Relationship and Marriage Education: Social Action for Family Unity
 SUSANNE M. ALEXANDER
- 3:15 – 4:15 Understanding the Experience of Engaged Young Adult Bahá’ís NURA MOWZON
- Woodbridge* **Philosophy I**
 Convener and Chair: IAN KLUGE
- 2:00 – 3:00 Good without God? IAN KLUGE
- 3:15 – 4:15 A Thought Experiment from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Is Applied to Hume’s Philosophical
 Problem of Induction PHILIP SMITH
- Saddleback* **Plenary Sessions Follow up Discussions**
 Chair: MARTHA SCHWEITZ
- 2:00 – 3:00 What are Bahá’ís Learning from Working in Fragile War-Torn States?
 ANDY TAMAS and VASU MOHAN
- 3:15 – 4:15 Engaged Research for Social Change: Rethinking Social Science Inquiry
 SHABNAM KOIRALA-AZAD

Pelican Hill **Psychology**
Chair: ABDU'L-MISSAGH GHADIRIAN
2:00 – 3:00 Implications of Bahá'í Concept of Mind, Body and Soul on the Future Evolution of Psychology ABDU'L-MISSAGH GHADIRIAN
3:15 – 4:15 Religious Coping among Bahá'ís GOLNOUSH MONFARED
4:30 – 5:30 The Bahá'í Faith as a Broad System and Social Work GUIA CALICDAN-APOSTLE

Conference Theater **Science and Religion**
Conveners: STEPHEN FRIBERG and RON SHIGETA, Chair: STEPHEN FRIBERG
2:00 – 3:00 The Human Mind: Does it Have a "Location"? KAMRAN SEDIG
3:15 – 4:15 Scientific Insights into "Here Am I" (Consciousness and Space-Time) MEHRDAD EHSANI
4:30 – 5:30 Common Ground: Science and Religion as a Social Media and a Way to Build Communities STEPHEN FRIBERG, MAYA BOHNHOFF, and BAHRAM NADIMI

Salon E **Social and International Development**
Chair: KIM NAQVI
2:00 – 3:00 The Power of the Local: Universal Participation in Global Change WHITNEY WHITE KAZEMIPOUR
3:15 – 4:15 Disability and the Bahá'í Faith KIMIYA SOHRAB MAGHZI
4:30 – 5:30 HiMaT: Learning from the Bahá'í Process of Growth for Comprehensive Poverty Alleviation in Northern Pakistan MICHAEL and JUDIE BOPP

Shady Canyon **Study of Religion**
Chair: JACK MCLEAN
3:15 – 4:15 City of Patience: The Nature of Bahá'u'lláh's Historic Announcement on April 22, 1863 in the Garden of Ridván SHAHROKH MONJAZEB
4:30 – 5:30 Turning the Word into Action: Employing Táhirih as a Model for Traversing the Seven and the Four Valleys of Bahá'u'lláh DEBORAH RANA
5:30 – 7:30 *Dinner Break*

Friday Evening – August 16, 2013

Grand Ballroom
7:30 **Plenary Session**
Chair: ADAM MONDSCHHEIN

The Matrix and Morality RAINN WILSON

Arts Gala
Glimpses MJ CYR
A Divine Collaboration KC PORTER, BELLA BLUE, and THE DESCENDANTS

Grand Ballroom
10:00 **Evening Arts Programme**
Screening of *Luminous Journey: 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America, 1912*

Saturday, August 17, 2013

Grand Ballroom

9:00

Plenary Session

Chair: LISA DUFRAIMONT

Devotions

Generation of Knowledge and Collective Learning in Action BORNA NOUREDDIN

Generation of Knowledge and Evolution of Thought, Public Opinion, and Policy through Engagement with Wider Society FARIDA VAHEDI

Artistic Presentation JAMEY HEATH & WALTER HEATH

Justice, Reconciliation, and the Future of Iran PAYAM AKHAVAN

12:00 – 2:45

Lunch break

Trabuco

1:00 – 2:30

Consultative Session on the Vision and Activities of the Association for Bahá'í Studies – North America

All are invited to an open consultation chaired by the ABS Executive Committee. How can ABS most effectively, in the words of the Universal House of Justice, “stimulate scholarly study of the Faith and its teachings, promote a sound understanding of the Cause in academic circles and demonstrate its relevance to the study of social issues”? Grab your lunch and come reflect on learning to date, consult about how you would like to see ABS develop, and suggest initiatives you might take to help make this possible.

Garden Pavilion

12:30 – 2:00

Special Session for Youth with Mr. Hooper Dunbar

2:45 – 5:30 p.m. Simultaneous Breakout Sessions

Oak Creek

Arts II

Convener and Chair: ANNE GORDON PERRY

2:45 – 3:45

Fusion and the Covenant: Art, Science and the Soul JALALIYYIH QUINN

4:00 – 5:00

Art: Its Creative, Spiritual and Healing Dimension XIAOJIE ZHENG

Trabuco

Bioethics and Health Sciences II

Convener and Chair: ELIZABETH BOWEN

2:45 – 3:45

How Food Choices Affect our Health, the Welfare of Humanity, and Our Environment
LISA MOLIN

- 4:00 – 5:30 **Death as a Messenger of Joy – Panel Presentation**
 Death by Joy JAMES CRIBB
 Dying without Fear BRENDA MAXWELL
- Saddleback* **Computational Science Panel**
 Chair: MITRA SOLOMON
- 4:00 – 5:30 Hidden Themes in 346 Bahá'í Prayers, Found with the Statistical Topic Model Latent Dirichlet Allocation LYNNE BUTLER
 Cybernetics as a Guide to Incorporating Learning into Institutional Functioning CRAIG LOEHLE
- Saddleback* **Human and Natural Environment**
 Convener and Chair: JOHN THELEN STEERE
- 2:45 – 3:45 We Are Organic with the World: Investigating Links between Spiritual Principles and the Built Environment BARBARA RUYS
- Salon B* **International Affairs**
 Chair: AUGUSTO LOPEZ-CLAROS
- 2:45 – 3:45 UN Security Council Expansion: Time for a Radical Approach? RICHARD DODGE
 4:00 – 5:00 The Progress of the World and the Development of Nations AUGUSTO LOPEZ-CLAROS
- Garden Pavilion* **Persian Session**
 Chair: MEHRAN KIAI
- 2:45 – 5:00 A Common Heritage as Witnessed by History, Literature and Artistic Expression IRAJ KHADEMI
- Woodbridge* **Philosophy II**
 Convener and Chair: IAN KLUGE
- 2:45 – 3:45 A Bahá'í Model for Making Ethical Decisions TRIP BARTHEL
 4:00 – 5:00 Bahá'u'lláh's Four States and Freud's Transference: Towards a New Understanding of Psychology WOLFGANG KLEBEL
- Salon E* **Plenary Session Follow up Discussions**
 Chair: MARTHA SCHWEITZ
- 2:45 – 3:45 May Knowledge Grow in our Hearts: Applying Spiritual Principles to Development Practice: The Case of Seva Mandir FARIDA VAHEDI
- Pelican Hill* **Psychology II**
 Chair: ABDU'L-MISSAGH GHADIRIAN
- 2:45 – 3:45 Shaping Habits of Thought for the Love of God DAVID R. SMITH
 4:00 – 5:00 Finding Freedom from Egocentricity DANIEL LORD
- Salon E* **Publishing Workshop**
 Facilitated by: The Bahá'í Publishing Trust-US
- 4:00 – 5:30 Publishing Works of Bahá'í Scholarship

- Conference Theater* **Science and Religion II**
 4:00 – 5:30 Conveners: STEPHEN FRIBERG and RON SHIGETA, Chair: STEPHEN FRIBERG
Panel on Evolution
 Human Evolution and the Bahá'í Faith KIANA MOHAJERI
 Evolution: A False Dichotomy MARK SALATA
- Conference Theater* **Social Enterprise**
 2:45 – 3:45 Chair: Samuel Benoit
 Adopting a Humble Posture of Innovation SAMUEL BENOIT
- Shady Canyon* **Study of Religion II**
 Chair: JACK MCLEAN
 2:45 – 3:45 Mount Your Steeds, O Heroes of God! SHASTRI PURUSHOTMA and SEAN GALLAGHER
 4:00 – 5:00 Reflections on the Four Valleys AMROLLAH HEMMAT
- 5:30 - 7:30 *Dinner Break*

Saturday Evening, August 17, 2013

- Grand Ballroom*
 7:30 **Plenary Session**
 Chair: PIERRE-YVES MOCQUAIS

Presentation of Awards for Distinguished Scholarship to Jack McLean, Sina Mossayeb and Mahnam Taslimi by the Association for Bahá'í Studies Executive Committee

The 31st Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture

Knowledge into Action: The Bahá'í Imperative to Serve Humanity
 LAYLI MILLER-MURO

- Grand Ballroom*
 9:30 **Evening Arts Programme**
The late evening Arts programme is one of many options open to the conference participants, and features planned and open-mic contributions.

Sunday, August 18, 2013

Grand Ballroom

9:00

Plenary Session

Chair: ERICA TOUSSAINT-BROCK

Devotions

Co-Generating Knowledge through Action-Research: Field Experiments in Behavioral Economics NAVA ASHRAF

An Interview with Dr. Richard Thomas: Scholarship, Learning and Action in the Field of Race Relations – Two Generations of Bahá'ís Reflect upon Key Racial Issues
RICHARD THOMAS, RAMYA NARAHARISETTI and AARON YATES

Creating Discourse through Creative Media, a Panel Presentation JOSH HOMNICK, and HASHEM SELPH. MODERATOR: ADAM MONDSCHHEIN

1:00

Closing remarks: Association for Bahá'í Studies Executive Committee

Abstracts and Autobiographical Notes

Farzin Aghdasi • Knowledge Generation by Youth Working in Clusters

The training institute, as the arrow of learning, is assisting the recognition of social forces that induce passivity and lethargy, and the generation of knowledge about how to free ourselves from such forces. We analyze the experience of this process in the advanced clusters in California. We use both science and religion as two complementary sources of knowledge for study and practice. The science associated with building a community of young people working in receptive neighborhoods is teaching us how to operate as a dialogical community, and engage junior youth for long-term friendship and service learning.

FARZIN AGHDASI was a Bahá'í pioneer in Africa much of his adult life and intimately involved in training institute development in southern Africa and North America. He served as a Continental Counselor for the Americas. Working in industrial research in California, he holds a PhD. in electrical engineering and has been a university professor.

Hussein Ahdieh • Awakening : The Birth and Tribulations of a Bahá'í Community in Iran

Presentation covers the tumultuous birth of the Bábí movement in Nayríz, recounts heroic struggles of 1850, 1853 and 1909 against the overwhelming forces of Iran's despotic monarchy and the horrific treatment of the survivors, including elderly, women and children. It covers the story of Vahíd as a spiritual leader, harbinger of a new way of life. The presentation brings to light the daily trials of the Nayrizi Bahá'ís as they endured the hostility of their Muslim neighbors. This is the story of ordinary people transforming themselves into heroes and heroines through the empowering Message brought by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

HUSSEIN AHDIEH, PhD, moved to the USA in his teens, earned a Master's degree in European Intellectual History and a Doctorate in Education. One of the founders of the world-renowned Harlem Preparatory School, Director of Higher Educational Program at Fordham University, author of *'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York, Awakening* and a new book on the life of Táhírih.

Payam Akhavan • Justice, Reconciliation, and the Future of Iran

As Iran goes through a historical transition from authoritarianism to democracy, a crucial question in building a culture of human rights is accountability of political leaders for past human rights abuses. In this regard, the Iran People's Tribunal, a victim-based truth-commission-in-exile is a remarkable grassroots development, established at the request of mourning mothers who lost their children in the mass-executions of the 1980s. With the testimony of over one hundred witnesses, including Bahá'ís, and widespread media coverage reaching millions in Iran, it has forced the Islamic Republic to admit the mass-executions of the 1980s and to even admit that it was a mistake. What can we learn from this experiment in accountability and how can it be developed into a broader movement for justice and building a culture of human rights?

PAYAM AKHAVAN, LL.M., S.J.D. (Harvard) is Professor of International Law at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. He was formerly a UN prosecutor in The Hague, a Founder of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, and Prosecutor of the Iran People's Tribunal.

Susanne M. Alexander • Relationship and Marriage Education: Social Action for Family Unity

Systematic relationship and marriage education in the Bahá'í community and general public will be strengthened with research and social discourse including the Bahá'í teachings. Key areas of contribution include character, chastity, equality, consultation, intercultural marriage, and parental consent. The group will assess the progress Marriage Transformation has made over the last 10 years and consult about future directions for research, development, and outreach.

SUSANNE M. ALEXANDER is a Relationship and Marriage Educator and Coach with a specialty in character. She is president of Marriage Transformation (www.marriagetransformation.com; www.bahaimarriage.net), currently based in Tennessee, USA. She is the author or co-author of many books, including *Marriage Can Be Forever – Preparation Counts!* based on the Bahá'í Writings.

Nava Ashraf • Co-Generating Knowledge through Action-Research: Field Experiments in Behavioral Economics

The generation of scientific knowledge has traditionally been an activity carried out by scholars, often far from practice. This presentation uses the example of Economics, where rigorous experiments carried out together with practitioners and policy makers have led to testing cherished assumptions within the discipline and to finding innovative, practical solutions in the field. It illustrates the benefits and challenges to both research and practice of joint participation in knowledge creation and application. The presenter will draw on her own research, using field experiments conducted with local field organizations and governments to test new ideas in behavioral economics, such as altruistic capital.

NAVA ASHRAF is an Associate Professor in the Negotiations, Organizations and Markets Unit at Harvard Business School. Her research combines psychology and economics, using both lab and field experiments to test insights from behavioral economics in the context of development projects around the world, and published in top economics journals such as the *American Economic Review*.

Trip Barthel • A Bahá'í Model for Making Ethical Decisions

What is the purpose of life? To acquire eternal spiritual virtues through prayer and service. The Bahá'í Writings contain a combination of virtues, principles and reciprocity that forms a single model for making ethical decisions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says the next world "is a world of sanctity and radiance," so "it is necessary that in this world he should acquire these divine attributes." (PUP, 225–26) This program will use interactive exercises to explore the theory and practice of solving ethical dilemmas from a Bahá'í perspective.

TRIP BARTHEL teaches and practices mediation and facilitation in the US and around the world. He founded and directed a community mediation for 10 years. He was the lead trainer for the Bahá'í Justice Society's Mediation Training Program. He has been working in China and India since 2008.

Samuel Benoit • Adopting a Humble Posture of Innovation

Where do good ideas come from? This is a question both business and development practitioners are becoming obsessed with, especially when it comes to wicked problems like poverty and climate change. Successful product innovation firms are becoming the new development gurus thanks to their mastery of the process of innovation. This presentation will juxtapose the processes of Silicon Valley innovation firms such as IDEO and Jump Associates with the collective learning and decision-making processes emerging from the Bahá'í communities engagement in social action

SAMUEL BENOIT is a recent graduate of the Master of Social Entrepreneurship program at Hult International Business School in San Francisco. He has worked for the Otesha Project, the Olinga Foundation, and the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad, India. Samuel has a BA in Environmental Studies from Carleton University.

Maya Bohnhoff • Common Ground: Science and Religion as a Social Media and a Way to Build Communities (see Friberg for abstract)

MAYA BOHNHOFF, a noted science fiction writer, musician, and internet commentator is a blogger and co-founder of Common Ground.

Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp • HiMaT: Learning from the Bahá'í Process of Growth for Comprehensive Poverty Alleviation in Northern Pakistan

Within the context of its global plans, Bahá'í communities are called to social action, defined as the application of Bahá'í principles and teachings to the issues and challenges affecting the wider society in which Bahá'í communities are embedded. This work will necessarily require a rigorous pursuit of Bahá'í scholarship, which can be defined as a process of applying spiritual principles to civilization-building endeavors. This presentation will explore the parallels between methods and outcomes of a comprehensive poverty alleviation project in northern Pakistan and the concepts and experience underpinning the application of the process of growth within the Bahá'í community worldwide.

MICHAEL BOPP, PhD – Co-founder of the Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning; has more than thirty years experience in grassroots training, facilitating participatory development, and helping organizations to become more effective in human and community development processes; is currently involved in guiding comprehensive community planning in several Canadian Aboriginal communities.

JUDIE BOPP, PhD – Co-founder of the Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning; has provided capacity building, evaluation, program design and research services to government and non-government agencies in 20 countries; has co-authored a basic primer in community development, entitled *Recreating the World*, used in Canadian university courses

Zhaleh Boyd • Knowing Nobility: Slavery and Misrecognition

The interconnectedness of humanity manifests itself in a number of increasingly recognizable forms, not least of which is contemporary slavery. The impact and existence of contemporary slavery is widely documented, yet despite the many viable, actionable solutions for addressing contemporary slavery presented to us, popular participation is relatively nonexistent. The misrecognition of our individual and collective abilities to establish justice within our communities facilitates both a rejection of relevant information and a tendency toward inaction despite highly actionable options. Join me for a discussion on the role of misrecognition in immobilizing agents of justice, and that of recognition in seeking solutions.

ZHALEH BOYD is pursuing a PhD at the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE) in the UK. From 2010-2012, she served as Technology & Trafficking in Persons Research Fellow at the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy while earning her Masters in Public Diplomacy.

Bahar Brocken • Food of the Future – Nutrition from a Bahá'í Perspective

This workshop takes a practical approach towards applying the nutrition related guidance in the Writings to everyday life. Together, we will study a selection of Bahá'í quotations that shine light on food and health, discuss how they compare to current scientific recommendations and develop strategies for implementing the guidance into a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

BAHAR BROCKEN was inspired by the Writings to pursue a career path that focuses on the link between food and wellbeing. She recently received her BSc in Nutrition at the University of Alberta and is currently completing a one year internship to become a Registered Dietician.

Lynne Butler • Hidden Themes in 346 Bahá'í Prayers, Found with the Statistical Topic Model Latent Dirichlet Allocation

Prayers are often arranged under headings that are not part of the sacred texts; none are supplied for Prayers and Meditations. For each of 346 prayers from authoritative sources, we use a statistical technique called Latent Dirichlet Allocation (Blei, Ng & Jordan, 2003) to discover its mixture of topics. We present a model with 6 topics for 346 prayers, illustrate how you can use the model to find a prayer on the same mixture of topics as your favorite prayer and how to locate prayers which contain a given word and are primarily on the same topic.

LYNNE BUTLER earned her PhD in Mathematics at MIT in 1986, taught at Princeton, then joined the faculty at Haverford College in 1991. During sabbaticals, she has been studying statistics at University of Chicago, where she presented her Masters paper "Latent Dirichlet Allocation for a Corpus of Prayers" in December 2012.

Guia Calicdan-Apostle • The Bahá'í Faith as a Broad System and Social Work

This presentation will examine the principles and beliefs of the Bahá'í Faith as a broad system whose theories may be applicable to social work. It will further explore this system within the contexts of human nature, religious fundamentalism versus liberalism, and the general nature of systems. In addition, this presentation will include a discourse on the importance of religion and spirituality for social work practice. Finally, the Bahá'í Faith may well serve as an effective tool for social workers employing spirituality as the foundation of professional ethics and to improve the welfare of their clients.

Born and raised in the Philippines, GUIA CALICDAN-APOSTLE came to America as an immigrant. With many years of practice in social work, Guia pursued a doctorate degree in social work at the University of Pennsylvania. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

James Cribb • *Death by Joy*

How can death—contemplation of which so often evokes irrational fear—be a messenger of joy, as declared by Baha'u'llah? *Death by Joy: An Escorted Journey*, the latest documentary by director Jim Cribb, explores such a foreign concept. This presentation combines his first-hand experience filming the last weeks in the life of a selfless and irrepressible Bahá'í named Mary with clips from the documentary. Here, in a challenging new light, is the embracement of death, not steeped in sadness for what is to be lost but illuminated with the joy of what can be found.

JAMES CRIBB is a photographer, writer, and filmmaker. For over twenty-five years, Cribb has combined visual artistry with technical insight to create works that honour his subjects. He has been published widely, including three collections of his sensitive coverage of marine environments in book form and two feature-length documentaries.

Richard Dodge • UN Security Council Expansion: Time for a Radical Approach?

After several decades of frustration, UN member states are at a loss as to how to proceed on the question of enlargement of the Security Council. Regional rivalries and the non committal attitude of the Permanent Five seem to be the main obstacles. Few states are able to rise above narrow self interest when considering alternatives to the present structure, yet remain dissatisfied with the current arrangement. The presenter proposes a 22-seat model with rotated and elected seats as a stimulus for discussion.

RICHARD DODGE earned the doctorate in geography at the University of Denver in 1999. He has taught at levels ranging from middle school to university in both the U.S. and Mexico. UN Security Council reform is a lifelong research interest.

Hooper Dunbar • The Ocean of Revelation: Dynamic Source of All Learning

What are the implications of immersing ourselves in the Ocean of Revelation? This presentation will consider the dimensions and scope of the Twin Revelations in this Day. It will offer thoughts about the

organization and thematic systematization of the Divine Verses for eventual application to the challenges of modern day society, and ideas related to horizontal analysis and graduated vertical comprehension of the Word of God, identifying the various modes of Divine Revelation as defined by the Twin Manifestations.

HOOPER DUNBAR, retired member of the Universal House of Justice, was a long-time Bahá'í pioneer, educator, translator and publisher in Latin America. An accomplished painter and published author, he has served for 37 years at all levels of Bahá'í administration.

Mehrdad Ehsani • Scientific Insights into “Here Am I” (Consciousness and Space-Time)

“Here Am I”, in the Long Obligatory Prayer, is our gateway to a scientific and spiritual investigation of the nature of consciousness and its significance in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. Simple review of Einstein's theory of relativity will establish the relationship between consciousness and space-time. We will show that there exists a magical present moment of time, independent of clock time through which clock time flows. This is our stepping stone to spiritual enlightenment. Its attributes, obstacles and extensive corroboration with Bahá'u'lláh's Seven Valleys, Hidden Words, and the Book of Certitude will be presented throughout the talk.

MEHRDAD EHSANI is the holder of Robert M. Kennedy Endowed Professorship at Texas A&M University. He has won over 100 US and international honors and awards and is the co-author of 17 books, over 350 publications, over 20 patents, and has given numerous invited technical and metaphysical talks around world.

Stephen R. Friberg, Maya Bohnhoff, and Bahram Nadimi • Common Ground: Science and Religion as a Social Media and a Way to Build Communities

Animated discussion about science and religion—“the two most potent forces in human life” say the Bahá'í teachings—continue to generate extraordinary levels of interest on the internet, among the book-buying public, and in society at large. But can these discussions create community? We evaluate the experience of the Common Ground effort—blogs, science and religion discussion groups, and soon local area meetings—as an exercise in community building around some of the most compelling issues—science and religion—that face people everywhere.

STEPHEN R. FRIBERG is a physicist, blogger about science and religion, and a long-time participant at ABS conferences. He wishes to see the dialogue about the two to move to a higher level. He is a co-founder of Common Ground.

Sean Gallagher • Mount your steeds, O heroes of God! (see Purushotma for abstract)

SEAN GALLAGHER attended UC Davis in California and The George Washington University in Washington, DC, where he currently resides. He works in technology and serves as secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Washington, DC.

Keyvan Geula • Emotional Intelligence/ Relationship, and Long Obligatory Prayer

Our brain continually reshapes itself according to the experiences we have. If we are learning a song, that circuitry will attract connections and neurons. If we are changing a habit; trying to get better at listening—then that circuitry will grow accordingly. On the other hand, when we try to overcome a bad habit, we're up against the thickness of the circuitry for something we've practiced and repeated thousands of times. Emotional intelligence is a way of recognizing, understanding and choosing how we think, feel and act. It shapes our interactions with others, with our own selves and with God.

KEYVAN GEULA, a licensed Marriage Family Therapist for over 20 years, specializes in using the Bahá'í Teachings to identify theories, techniques and approaches that produce the best results for her clients. She is the founder and executive director of Center for Global Integrated Education, a non-profit Bahá'í inspired educational organization.

Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian • Implications of Bahá'í Concept of Mind, Body and Soul on the Future Evolution of Psychology

Contemporary psychology is largely in denial of the existence and influence of spirit, viewing mind as a material product of brain cell activities and consciousness as a "ghost in the machine" (brain). The Bahá'í Revelation aims to transform character both inwardly and outwardly. Bahá'í Writings identify mind as the power of the human soul or spirit and an intermediary between the body and spirit. Faculties of the mind emanate from the soul, independently from the body. The influence Bahá'í concepts will have on materialistic theories of joy and suffering, leading to a deeper understanding of human nature, will be explored.

ABDU'L-MISSAGH GHADIRIAN, Professor, McGill University, Faculty of Medicine, is the author of extensive publications including research articles and several books, the most recent of which are *Creative Dimensions of Suffering* and *Materialism – Moral and Social Consequences*. His recent teaching and research works have been on science and spirituality.

Nava Melody Ghalili • Mass Media and our Perception of Truth: The Far-Reaching Consequences

As truth in the media becomes clouded, so does our perception of it. Our resolve to independently investigate reality becomes more crucial as the far-reaching consequences of believing in falsities cripple the foundation of our thoughts, actions, careers, relationships, institutions as well as our individual and societal growth. In this workshop, we will view the world through the eyes of a journalist in mainstream media. With a marriage of spiritual disciplines to tools from the media industry, we will explore ways in which we can become a true seeker and the journalist of our own lives.

NAVA GHALILI was one the youngest news anchors in the history of American television. The Emmy-nominated journalist is a consultant/trainer of multi-media agencies, war journalists and human rights activists' worldwide. Nava is starting a Master's in Comparative Politics (Middle East Conflict) at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Devon Gundry • Watch, Like, Share: How YouTube is Advancing Mankind (see Mogharabi for abstract)

DEVON GUNDRY is a co-founder of SoulPancake, actor Rainn Wilson's media/production company that explores life's big questions through art and creativity. He recently launched Albumatic, a photo sharing app that allows for creating albums in social spaces. Devon is also a musician currently working on a new spiritual music album.

Amrollah Hemmat • Reflections on the Four Valleys

In the Four Valleys, although speaking in the language of the Sufis, Bahá'u'lláh seems to be imbedding the nucleus and the seed of a new dispensation, its full potential and fruit to be unravelled in future years by His Own pen, and elucidated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. What in surface appears to be a marvelous rendering of the mystical Islamic beliefs, can be perceived as the first streaks of the dawn of a new civilization, unparalleled in its glory in the annals of history. This presentation will offer an exegesis on this very illusive writing of Bahá'u'lláh, based on such understanding of the text.

AMROLLAH HEMMAT is the co-author with John Hatcher of four volumes of poetry translated from Persian and Arabic into English. He received an MBA from Iran Center for Management Studies, an MS in Applied Behavioral Science from the Johns Hopkins University and a PhD in Communication from the University of South Florida.

Nazanin M. Heydarian • Chicana Feminism and the Faith: Learning from Diverse Philosophies

The discussion is purposed to examine the perspective of Chicana "feminist" philosophy as it relates to the Bahá'í writings about the equality of women and men. A second aim is to challenge participants to think of working with others of diverse philosophical orientations in building a new united yet diverse civilization. Over-and-above examining this philosophy through the lens of one current understanding of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh (or vice-versa), this presentation seeks to help participants explore and identify tools and attitudes necessary to engage in discourse with people of various philosophical and spiritual orientations.

NAZANIN HEYDARIAN I received a BA in Psychology and music history/theory. I am currently earning a Clinical Psychology MA and a Health Psychology PhD (all at the University of Texas at El Paso). My interests include resilience to life stressors, statistical methods, learning and memory, gender stereotyping, and musical processes.

Josh Homnick • Creating Discourse through Creative Media, a Panel Presentation (see Selph for abstract)

JOSH HOMNICK started at MTV in the early 90's, and wore all hats in production and post-production. His extensive experience comes from amazing projects for renowned ad agencies like Wieden+Kennedy, directing commercials for eBay, Samsung and Nestle, and developing shows which sold to Fox and Xbox and more recently co-founding SoulPancake.

Whitney White Kazemipour • The Power of the Local: Universal Participation in Global Change

The immensity of global problems can cause apathy, thwarting people's participation in social change efforts. Envisioning world problems from a local perspective tailors projects to local human resources, history, and conditions, thereby improving potential participants' motivation and thinking. However, there are risks to ignoring regional and global perspectives. Combining textual analysis of the Bahá'í Writings; reference to principles underlying Bahá'í core activities; anthropological research on an indigenous, Panamanian Bahá'í community; and anthropological research on American immigrant mothers, this paper proposes there may be an ideal balance between local and global perspectives when promoting universal participation in small communities.

WHITNEY WHITE KAZEMIPOUR is a psychological anthropologist (PhD, UCLA 2011). She is a member of the Bahá'í faith, and also mother to three almost-always darling daughters.

Iraj Khademi • A Common Heritage as Witnessed by History, Literature and Artistic Expression

An exploration of Persian history, literature and art in their all-embracing manifestations reveal that we, the people of Iran, share the same heritage and uphold the same ideals, values and culture. This heritage, developed by our ancestors, is continued across the centuries. So why alienate portions of our people with fleeing and exclusionary ideologies?

IRAJ KHADEMI, Graduated in Civil Law, Political Science and Economy, practiced as Attorney at Law for several decades, and got his proficiency in Literature under eminent scholars such as Zarrinkoob, Farivar and Beyzaee. He is well known as a poet, writer and researcher, contributing articles to various well known publications.

Pooneh Khazei • Insights from the Frontiers of Learning (see Sami)

POONEH KHAZEI holds a Master's degree in Communications from Boston University. She serves as a teacher of children's classes and works with youth to accompany them in service. She is striving to learn how to enter into purposeful discussions on themes of spiritual import with people from every walk of life.

Wolfgang Klebel • Bahá'u'lláh's Four States and Freud's Transference: Towards a New Understanding of Psychology

This presentation explores how "... these Four States," which are "... true of Thyself," (Seven Valleys 27) are related to the Transference Concept of Sigmund Freud, considering the Object Relation Theory, describing the development of the God Presentation in the child (as described by Winnicott and Rizutto). In my Dissertation, "Transference and Culture" (Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, 1978), I re-interpreted the clinical transference concept toward sublimation, culture and religion. Consequently, the transference process understood as connecting Bahá'u'lláh's Four States can be used for forming a new paradigm for a Bahá'í Psychology of Unity in Diversity

WOLFGANG KLEBEL studied Theology at the Papal University Gregorian and University in Innsbruck Austria. He served as parish priest and left the priesthood in 1969 after moving to USA. He has a PhD in Psychology, and has worked for 15 years in the California women's prison. He has been a Bahá'í since 1994.

Ian Kluge • Good without God?

We often hear that we can be good without God—but is this claim as strong as many believe? To answer this question, we shall explore some challenging quotations from the Bahá'í Writings as well as several works by several Humanist and atheist philosophers. In this way we shall try to clear up such questions as 'Why do the Writings say belief in God is a pre-condition for complete moral actions?'; 'What are the criteria for moral action?' and 'Can science provide moral guidance?'

IAN KLUGE is a poet, playwright and philosophy scholar specializing in the philosophical aspects of the Bahá'í Writings published in the *Lights of Irfan* Series and *Studies in Bahá'í Philosophy*. He is a frequent presenter at the Irfan Colloquia and at ABS conferences.

Shabnam Koirala-Azad • Reading, Analyzing and Transforming Reality through Participatory Research

Participatory Research (PR), referred to as a “democratic practice of research,” is concerned with unequal power dynamics in the research process. The approach stems from the belief that experiential knowledge holds the epistemological key to unlocking the methods and strategies for producing social change within communities, through collective participation, engaged dialogue and inquiry aimed at finding relevant actions for social problems. By using examples of youth-led PR projects in Nepal, the US and Iran, this presentation attempts to draw insights relevant to “a worldwide community...learning to read its immediate reality, analyse its possibilities, and apply methods and instruments of the Five Year Plan.”

Shabnam Koirala-Azad • Engaged Research for Social Change: Rethinking Social Science Inquiry

This participatory session will encourage discussion on methods of social science research geared towards informed social action where outcomes include empowerment and transformation on multiple social levels - the self, community, and institutions. Questions we will explore will include, but are not confined to: what is the purpose of research? What does it mean to do research *with* vs. *on* individuals and communities? How can we create greater synergy between our teaching, scholarship, and spiritual lives? How can we begin to address questions of rigor and validity in community-based work? How can systematic inquiry complement the “organic phenomenon” of community building?

SHABNAM KOIRALA-AZAD is Associate Professor and Chair of the International and Multicultural Education Department at the University of San Francisco. She is co-founder of the first degree program in Human Rights Education in the United States. Her teaching and scholarship focus on the relationship between education and socio-economic change and stem from her upbringing in Nepal.

Craig Loehle • Cybernetics as a Guide to Incorporating Learning into Institutional Functioning

Cybernetics is the science of control of dynamic systems. This approach is used to look for mechanisms for incorporating learning into the structure and processes of Bahá'í institutions and communities.

CRAIG LOEHLE received his PhD from Colorado State University in 1982 and is an active research scientist. His research specialties include dynamic systems, nonlinear models, statistics, and simulation. He is the author of 143 scientific publications, 150 technical reports, 5 books (2 on Bahá'í topics) and a software package.

Augusto Lopez-Claros • The Progress of the World and the Development of Nations

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Universal House of Justice's message to the Bahá'ís of the world in which they noted that the Founder of their Faith had "urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life." That message set out the concept of social and economic development as being firmly embedded in the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith and called for the "achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth." What has been the progress made and what have we learned about what matters for the development of nations?

AUGUSTO LOPEZ-CLAROS is the World Bank's Director of Global Indicators and Analysis. He has also been Chief Economist and Director of the Global Competitiveness Program at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. He has a PhD in economics and more than 25 years experience as an international economist

Daniel Lord • Finding Freedom from Egocentricity

Egocentricity is a topic of continuing investigation in psychological science, but such research has run into paradoxes, and self-interestedness remains a dominant paradigm in social science. The Bahá'í teachings provide an alternative, by emphasizing service for the betterment of all humanity for rising above the restrictions of egoism and selfishness. This presentation reports on recent psychological research on egocentricity and explores the Bahá'í writings on the subject. It concludes with readings from messages of the Universal House of Justice on learning how to become free of self-centeredness by active participation in the Five Year Plan.

DANIEL B. LORD, Ph.D. is a psychology professor at University of Alaska Southeast, as well as an Of ?? Counsel attorney in Anchorage.

Kimiya Sohrab Maghzi • Disability and the Bahá'í Faith

The presentation addresses the concept of disability through the lens of the Bahá'í Writings. In particular, implicit and explicit references to disability in the Bahá'í Writings are investigated to provide an understanding of the manner in which individuals with disabilities should be perceived. The analysis is guided by the recognition of the value of individuals regardless of physical or cognitive abilities, which is essential to obviate stereotypes and misconceptions. Furthermore, the text from the Revelation

of Bahá'u'lláh may serve to generate knowledge that facilitates the deconstruction of prejudice and societal stigma associated with the notion of disability

KIMIYA SOHRAB MAGHZI, is an educator engaged in neighborhood community building process, teaching children's classes, and facilitating Ruhi institute courses. She is pursuing a doctorate in Disability Studies at Chapman University. Her research includes disability studies, family and individual perspectives on disabilities, and breaking down stereotypes and stigmas pertaining to individuals with disabilities.

Hoda Mahmoudi • The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and Academic Discourse

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland is an interdisciplinary academic program that advances discourse and generates knowledge about global peace. This presentation is threefold. It will: 1) set out the purpose of the Bahá'í Chair as a unique academic program that examines spiritual values in exploring solutions to the realization of peace within the context of the current Five Year Plan, 2) explore examples of concepts and principles from the Bahá'í teachings, correlating them with knowledge from academic fields in search of solutions to peace, 3) and outline the Bahá'í Chair's organic approach in developing a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies that lead to the creation of a better world.

DR. HODA MAHMOUDI holds the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland. From 2001-2011 she was Coordinator of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center. Previously, she was the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and member of the Sociology Department at Northeastern Illinois University.

Brenda Maxwell • Dying without Fear

Even though the inevitability of death is a reality for every human being, the thought of dying often provokes an irrational fear that creates a barrier to the study and research of the dying experience. By paying attention to what patients actually experience, one can break away from the cultural apprehensions and superstitions into a world far more appealing and pleasant than that portrayed in Dante's "Inferno", or the world of Hades from the ancient Greek mythology. The key to success lies in the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings. In this presentation, Dr. Maxwell will share glimpses from her book, *Dying without Fear*.

DR. BRENDA MAXWELL, a family doctor specializing in geriatrics and palliative care, has escorted numerous patients to prepare for their eternal journey with hope for the future and with expectation of the wonders of the life to come. The uniqueness of her approach lies in her understanding that the journey as one approaches death is a wonderful mystical experience.

Alex Mazloom • Forget your own selves... Bend your energies to... the education of men

Each one of us has a very limited time in this earthly world to take part in the education of men. There are many opportunities in your very own neighborhood to become involved with the education of children and youth at public schools. In this interactive workshop we will share our 7-year learnings,

challenges, and success stories to establish spiritual financial literacy programs at schools in the San Diego Unified School District (the 8th largest in the nation). Are you ready to forget yourself and bend your energy toward the education of men?

ALEX MAZLOOM, a Bahá'í originally from Iran, co-founded Mind Treasures in 2006 to help people obtain, manage, and utilize wealth through a unique curriculum that is suitable for all ages and teaches finances through character development. Alex currently serves as the Executive Director of Mind Treasures, based in San Diego, California.

Layli Miller-Muro • Knowledge into Action: The Bahá'í Imperative to Serve Humanity

While we continue to struggle to understand how to apply Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to heal the ills of the world, exciting learning has taken place in recent years regarding the development of patterns of community life and the application of Bahá'í principles to give relief to the suffering of humanity. While still in a stage of infancy, experiments in Bahá'í-inspired social and economic development and social action have given way to recent encouragement by the House of Justice to engage in social action as a natural outgrowth of the maturation of community life and grassroots expressions of need. This presentation will explore how the knowledge of our faith and our experience in this arena provide a present challenge to arise, unlike we have before, to serve humanity.

LAYLI MILLER-MURO is Executive Director of the Tahirih Justice Center, a Bahá'í-inspired non-profit dedicated to the legal protection of women and girls fleeing human rights abuses. Layli was named one of the "150 Fearless Women in the World" by Newsweek Magazine. She is also a mother of three young children.

Shabnam Mogharabi and Devon Gundry • Watch, Like, Share: How YouTube Is Advancing Mankind

Did you watch Caine's Arcade? Remember KONY 2012? What about Kid President? All three videos inspired millions into action. Today, the arts online are about more than watching entertaining cat videos on YouTube. Talented artists are posting online content with uplifting, spiritual messages that both change perceptions and inspire action. This multimedia presentation explores how passionate, Bahá'í-inspired creative companies and filmmakers use social networking platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Kickstarter, HitRecord, Vine, etc. to inspire and activate change. The presentation also discusses the importance of art in advancing the collective consciousness of society, our youth, and mankind as a whole.

SHABNAM MOGHARABI is an owner and Executive Producer at SoulPancake, actor Rainn Wilson's media/production company that explores life's big questions through art and creativity. SoulPancake posts thoughtful, uplifting videos daily to its premium YouTube channel www.youtube.com/soulpancake, and now develops content for television, events, and major brands.

Kiana Mohajeri • Human Evolution and the Bahá'í Faith

In the Bahá'í Writings, emphasis is placed on the harmony of science and religion. Recent advances in technology have exposed a broader understanding of many facets of the sciences, including the area of human evolution. While new findings continue to be made in this realm of biology, the question remains as to how science and religion come together within this field. Through parallel consideration of the Bahá'í writings and evolutionary genomic evidence, the accepted stance on human evolution can be supported and shown to be in harmony with the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith.

KIANA MOHAJERI graduated from the University of Washington in 2012 with a Bachelor degree in Cell and Molecular Biology. She has spent the last 4 years focusing her time on genomics research and hopes to pursue both a MD and PhD in the near future

Vasu Mohan • What Are Bahá'ís Learning from Working in Fragile War-Torn States? (see Tamas for abstract)

VASU MOHAN works on democracy, governance and human rights in Asia with a focus on empowerment of youth, women, minorities and people with disabilities. He currently serves as the Deputy Director for Asia Programs at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Washington, D.C., and has managed IFES' work in Afghanistan and India for the past decade.

Lisa Molin • How Food Choices Affect Our Health, the Welfare of Humanity, and Our Environment

Food choices affect the health of the individual and humanity as a whole on both the physical and spiritual level. It also plays a significant role in the health of our planet and is a key player in current issues of concern, including global warming and the escalation of chronic disease. The Writings of our Faith will be examined in light of these topics and used to demonstrate the importance of individual understanding and initiative to institute change.

LISA MOLIN, I am a practicing Otolaryngologist-Head and Neck Surgeon residing in Los Osos, California. I received my undergraduate degrees in Agricultural Biochemistry and Agronomy. My special interests are nutrition and health. I participate in medical missions for the treatment of cleft lips and palates.

Adam Mondschein (Moderator) • Creating Discourse through Creative Media, a Panel Presentation

ADAM MONDSCHHEIN is an award winning actor. From film and television to Shakespearean theater, Adam's breadth of experience is vast. His commitment to service has also led to him voicing several Bahá'í audio book projects.

Golnoush Monfared • Religious Coping among Bahá'ís

Despite earlier researchers' perspectives of religion as a simple and stereotypical construct which either causes harm or is a form of defense against reality, current researchers such as Pargament (1997) offer

the view that people have a more complex and varied experience with religious coping, some positive and some negative. Based on this recent theoretical perspective, the first measure of religious coping was developed to assess how the followers of the Bahá'í Faith use their religious beliefs and practices in the process of coping with life challenges. The reliability and validity of this measure was examined using a sample of 229 Bahá'í individuals in the United States.

DR. GOLNOUSH MONFARED, is a clinical psychologist in private practice. Her specialty is in working with adults, children, and families dealing with various issues such as depression, anxiety, and trauma. She is also specialized in working with immigrants and refugees.

Shahrokh Monjazez • The City of Patience: The Nature of Bahá'u'lláh's Historic Announcement on April 22, 1863 in the Garden of Ridván

This Ridván 2013 marked the 150th anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's "Declaration of His Mission to His companions" in the Najíbíyyih Garden in Baghdad. On the first day of His arrival to the Garden (April 22), Bahá'u'lláh revealed a remarkable and singularly important Tablet, entitled *Madínat'us-[^]abr* (*The City of Patience*), in which He discloses in symbolically rich yet veiled language the redemptive Mission of God's Supreme Manifestation for this Promised Day of God. Since there is currently no authorized Bahá'í English translation of this lengthy and awe-inspiring Work, the presentation will explore the contents of the Tablet and attempts to "unveil" some of its major themes.

SHAHROKH MONJAZEB is the co-founder of The Furútan Academy for the Study of Bahá'í History and Sacred Text and is the author of numerous articles on Bahá'í history and sacred scripture including a monograph on Bahá'u'lláh entitled *Bahá'u'lláh: A Brief Survey of His Life and Works*.

Nura Mowzoon • Understanding the Experience of Engaged Young Adult Bahá'ís

Courtship and marriage is a "hot topic" within the Bahá'í community, but very little academic research has actually studied the experience of young adults in this phase of their lives. This study explores the experienced of engaged young adult Bahá'ís and what their journey has been like within the Bahá'í community and in mainstream society, as well as how the Bahá'í Faith has influenced their experience. This presentation focuses on themes that emerged from intensive interviews conducted with engaged young adult Bahá'ís, in an attempt to gain an academic perspective on a deeply personal and often complicated phase in one's life.

NURA MOWZOON received her BS in Family Studies and Child Development with a minor in Psychology, an MS in Marriage and Family Therapy, and in the final phases of completing a doctoral degree. She is faculty associate at Arizona State University and offers individual consulting and coaching, with a particular interest in couple's work.

Bahram Nadimi • Common Ground: Science and Religion as a Social Media and a Way to Build Communities (see Friberg for abstract)

BAHRAM NADIMI, an optical engineer and promoter of movies and theatrical productions, writes some of the most popular blogs on Common Ground.

Kim Naqvi • What is Bahá'í Scholarship? (see Weinberg for abstract)

KIM NAQVI is an economic and development geographer with a BSc in Biology, and an MA and PhD in Geography. She teaches human geography at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia.

Ramya Narahariseti • An Interview with Dr. Richard Thomas: Scholarship, Learning and Action in the Field of Race Relations – Two Generations of Bahá'ís Reflect upon Key Racial Issues (see Thomas for abstract)

RAMYA NARAHARISETTI was first exposed to the intricacies of race relations growing up in the segregated state of Michigan. At MSU she was a part of Multi-Racial Unity Living Experience, a social justice organization. She is pursuing a Masters degree in Global Health and Population focusing on the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Borna Nouredin • Generation of Knowledge and Collective Learning in Action

DR. BORNA NOUREDDIN serves as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas.

Anne Gordon Perry and Tim Perry • 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Western Journey: What Have We Learned? Where Do We Take It from Here?

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the Bahá'í Prophet Bahá'u'lláh, traveled in 1912 to nine states and one Canadian province, He came with a message of universal peace, the unity of East and West, racial harmony, gender equality, and a visionary view of America's future. What have we learned from studying His journey and celebrating its centenary? How is the journey larger than any of us can grasp, and how does it offer seeds of transformation we can now nurture and reap? Hear from the makers of Luminous Journey, a film that documents 'Abdu'l-Bahá's history-making and life-changing visit to the West.

ANNE GORDON PERRY, PhD Aesthetic Studies, teaches at the Art Institute of Dallas. With husband /co-producer Tim Perry, she has documented 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to America in a film, Luminous Journey. She has also just published a new edition of Green Acre on the Piscataqua, with an expanded chapter on 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

TIM PERRY, video producer/director, currently works as a producer for Time Warner Cable Media. He created three videos for the 1992 Bahá'í World Congress and has worked with Bahá'í Media Services on the U.S. Bahá'í Newsreel's opening animation and a "Call on Faith" app series about the travels of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Publishing Workshop • Publishing Works of Bahá'í Scholarship

This participatory session, facilitated by the Manager of the U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Tim Moore, and Chief Editor, Bahhaj Taherzadeh, will focus on a range of issues that are of interest to those considering publishing in any venue: the current book market, online publishing, editorial matters,

scope of BPT publishing, Bahá'í literature review, collaboration among Bahá'í authors, etc. It is hoped that those with publishing experience will attend to both share what they are learning and ask questions of others.

Shastri Purushotma and Sean Gallagher • Mount your steeds, O heroes of God!

Four score and one year ago, a book was released to the Bahá'í community in English, and lovingly dedicated "to the Greatest Holy Leaf, the last survivor of a Glorious and Heroic Age". In 2013, *The Dawn-Breakers* is out of print, and can cost over \$200 to buy used on Amazon.com. This presentation will examine how a renewed and strengthened connection with the Dawn-Breakers could benefit the North American Bahá'í community today.

SHASTRI PURUSHOTMA currently resides in Northern California working with the online news industry. He writes for the Huffington Post and other publications about topics related to the Bahá'í Faith and has served as human rights officer for the US National Spiritual Assembly's office of external affairs in Washington, DC, and as a secretary at the Bahá'í World Center.

Jalaliyyih Quinn • Fusion and the Covenant: Art, Science and the Soul

Praised for her art, turned away from science as a young person, Jalaliyyih Quinn never thought she would see the day when science would become a central focus of her art. It was the Bahá'í principle of the harmony of science and religion that opened the door and her father who gave her the admiration of physics. *Fusion and the Covenant*, a series of three paintings, were created by musing on the similarities between atomic fusion and the individual soul finding the Covenant of God.

JALALIYYIH QUINN, MFA University Colorado, Boulder, held solo exhibitions and taught art in U.S, China, and Liberia. In recent years her paintings are about science and the Bahá'í writings. In China, Quinn received top awards. After nineteen years pioneering, Quinn returned to Colorado USA. Visit her new website: www.jalaliyyihquinn.org

Deborah Rana • Turning the Word into action: employing Táhirih as a model for traversing the Seven and the Four Valleys of Bahá'u'lláh

How can study of the response of Táhirih to the Promised Qá'im offer a potential model for the fulfillment of the Word of God calling into being a new spiritual creation? How might we trace the steps of her enkindlement mapped by the roadmap of the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys to inspire us to have this scholarship inspire us to dedicated action beyond our finite selves?

DEBORAH THORPE RANA was raised in a Bahá'í family. She is interested in the empowerment of women to carry a female ethos of leadership into the world nurtured from an appreciation of the unique spiritual station of women and their role in working toward the promised Day of Justice.

Barbara Ruys • We Are Organic with the World: Investigating Links Between Spiritual Principles and the Built Environment

Underlying modern architecture was a belief that the ‘correct’ design of buildings and cities would mold better people. This approach failed because it only considered half of the equation, as a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi clarifies, “Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it”. After a short presentation highlighting symbiotic spiritual and physical change of a street in San Diego, small group discussion will investigate the relationship between spiritual principles in action and the environment we create. The session will end with each group sharing

BARBARA RUYS, a licensed architect born to Bahá’í pioneers in Holland, has lived in Europe, the USA and Africa. With a BA in Art History from Reed College and a MARCH from Harvard, her presentations connecting spirituality and architecture include two American Institute of Architects Conventions and several ABS conferences.

Mark Salata • Evolution: A False Dichotomy

A false dichotomy is presented to the public when addressing biological evolution in U.S. classrooms. We are pushed to choose between faith and reason. As Bahá’ís we are called to challenge such false dichotomies and promote unity between science and religion. But does this mean that all things are equal or that ‘both sides’ should be taught in a science classroom? Where is the line drawn between science and religion or are we taught to blend the two? A history of the topic and key scientific and religious points will frame the context of the presentation.

MARK SALATA, PhD, has studied the topic of biological evolution from the perspective of an associate professor of biology, science education consultant, and follower of the Bahá’í Faith. He has facilitated special courses and professional development for teachers and students in this topic.

Mojgan Sami and Pooneh Khazei • Insights from the Frontiers of Learning

A consultative look at the case studies presented in the document and companion video. We will look at the material collectively, briefly, and break into smaller groups to consult on questions such as: What does accompaniment look like? What are the ‘opportunities afforded by personal circumstances’ and how can we best identify them? What does it mean to ‘learn to read their own reality, see their own possibility, make use of their own resources’? Our goal is to deepen our understanding and create action plans to help advance our clusters and our personal service.

DR. MOJGAN SAMI is an interdisciplinary scholar with a background in international law, economics, public health, urban planning and development. Her current research is focused on identifying the multiple frames of health embedded in public policy and planning discourses. She is interested in developing research methodologies that allow scholars to study complex social problems which take into account the hidden assumptions made about human and organizational nature.

Sahar D. Sattarzadeh • Soul 2.0: Introducing Spiritual Identity into Social Media Discourse

This interactive session presents an analysis of four virtual social discourse spaces involving virtual communities of people discussing solutions to social problems and ills. The analysis juxtaposes the

characteristics and qualities of “marginalized” identities presented by the contributors within the context of physical, social realities and how they relate to knowledge and the struggle against oppression when confronted with the spiritual truth that the essential reality of the identity of humankind is the soul. The “preservation” of such cultural- or gender-based identities, particularly among “marginalized” populations (e.g., women, minority groups) will also be discussed through a social-spiritual analysis.

SAHAR D. SATTARZADEH is an instructor of sociology and a graduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park, specializing in the study of the social transformation of marginalized and underserved populations. Her research and advocacy interests include: human rights, social movements, inequality, and notions and applications of justice.

Cindy Savage • Igniting Young Hearts: Writing Bahá’í Youth Fiction

This interactive workshop will introduce the key elements in integrating Bahá’í concepts into youth fiction writing. Bahá’í youth are being asked “to commit, to steel themselves for a life of service,” and to labour that “the light of justice may shed its radiance upon the whole world.” How can stories inspire youth to rise to higher levels of service? Bahá’í fiction offers a sharp contrast to modern fiction that is obsessed with materialism, mortality and magic. Bahá’í fiction can address the inequities in the world and offer rays of hope to a generation that can only see the sins of the past.

CINDY SAVAGE is the author of *Nothing in Common*, *Journey to Mount Eternity* and the Youth Wave series. She was the editor of *Brilliant Star*, the *Shanghai Student Post* and the *Xuhui News*, and taught writing through the Institute for Children’s Literature Institute since 1993. She created the World Ambassador Program with over 4000 students in Shanghai.

Payam Sazegar • Bahá’í Medical Association of Canada Networking Meeting

BMAC invites all physicians and health care professionals, and those in training, to join us for our regular networking meeting at the ABS conference. There will be a presentation on current activities of BMAC by a member of their national executive, and presentations that explore the application of the Baha'i writings to the healing sciences.

PAYAM SAZEGAR is Assistant Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at University of California-San Francisco and the University of British Columbia. He is also a member of the executive committee of the Baha'i Medical Association of Canada.

Kamran Sedig • The Human Mind: Does It Have a “Location”?

It is often assumed that the mind is “located” in the brain. The Bahá’í Writings differentiate the two and state that the mind does not reside in the brain. Recent theories of cognition also suggest that human thinking is not located in the brain. These theories posit that mental processes are distributed among, emerge from, and are extended by physical and abstract artifacts external to the brain (e.g., social and representational artifacts). In this presentation we will examine and compare the concepts of brain, mind, soul, and spirit in the light of both Bahá’í Writings and current theories of cognition.

KAMRAN SEDIG is an Associate professor at Western University. He received his MSc from McGill in Computer Science (specializing in artificial intelligence), and his PhD from the University of British Columbia in Computer Science (specializing in applied cognitive sciences). He has more than 90 publications in international journals, conferences, and books.

Hashem Selph, Josh Homnick and Adam Mondschein (Moderator) • Creating Discourse through Creative Media – a Panel Presentation

Artists are engaged in the shaping of social discourse, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the field of filmmaking. In a world saturated with degrading images of sex, plagued with violence, and a lack of recognition of our spiritual reality, these cinematic artists, influenced by their Faith, are paving a new path... and drawing great attention from the masses. In this panel we will delve into their experiences and inspiration and explore how the Faith, their career, service to humanity, and ultimately success in the "secular world" are all interrelated.

HASHEM SELPH is a film and television producer and writer based in Los Angeles. Focusing primarily on the documentary form, he has contributed to films on a wide range of issues and which have been distributed on television and in theatres. He is currently a producer / writer for a newly-launched Deepak Chopra channel.

David Smith • Shaping Habits of Thought for the Love of God

How do we grow in our service to the world and thereby realize our true self? What can it mean in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to "Act in accordance with the counsels of the Lord?" How do we relinquish habits of thought and behavior that are antithetical to the Faith and harmful to the world? The prescription needed and the application required are to be found in the Writings of the Faith and the Plans of the Universal House of Justice.

DR. DAVID SMITH is a staff surgeon at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Humber River Regional Hospital in Toronto and an Assistant Professor in Ophthalmology at the University of Toronto.

Philip Smith • A Thought Experiment from 'Abdu'l-Bahá Is Applied to Hume's Philosophical Problem of Induction

This paper discusses a thought experiment and example of inductive reasoning from 'Abdu'l-Bahá as applied to Hume's Problem of Induction, stated concisely as "all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past... If there be any suspicion, that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion." In the process 'Abdu'l-Bahá demonstrates "that the difference between materialists and those who believed in God was by no means so great as was generally assumed."

PHILIP SMITH holds a DEA in agronomic sciences and biological engineering from Gembloux Agricultural University, an MSc in Agricultural Development from the University of London and a BSc

(Honours) in Mathematics and Engineering from Queen's University in Kingston. His research interests include the philosophy of science and complex systems analysis

John Steere and Michelle Thelen-Steere • Blessed is the Spot: Pilgrimage and Sacred Place as Catalysts for the Evolution of Character Towards Personal Transformation

One of the remarkable features of the Bahá'í Dispensation is its appeal to our senses and intelligence, not just our spiritual selves. This process of encouraging learning in an integrated, contextual manner is especially evident in the experience of pilgrimage as the renewal of the human relationship to sacred space as expressed in Bahá'í shrines and temples. The presenters will explore how the Faith's Central Figures sought to cultivate this contextual epiphany of faith; especially through the act of pilgrimage and encountering these sacred places that serve to imbue specific experiences and virtues of the Holy Family, thus providing a template, at once living and historical, to model ourselves after.

JOHN STEERE is an environmental planner and activator who serves on several environmental and arts/ecology non-profit boards; he is the co-author of *Restoring the Estuary* and numerous articles on deep ecology. He holds a BA from Harvard College and a Joint Masters in City Planning /Landscape Architecture from UC Berkeley.

Andy Tamas and Vasu Mohan • What Are Bahá'ís Learning from Working in Fragile War-Torn States?

The focus of this session is on what Bahá'ís are learning from working in fragile war-torn states such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Nepal, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Yemen. It is difficult to compress years of experience in the short time available, so we will briefly address only a few questions: What does "generation and application of knowledge" actually mean, in this sense? What knowledge has been generated from working in fragile war-torn states? How is this knowledge being applied? What are the implications of this for fragile states and the international community, contemporary scholarship, and Bahá'ís and their friends who have an interest in this field?

ANDY TAMAS is a governance and capacity development specialist with experience in fragile war-torn states (Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen), with a focus on strengthening and evaluation of public sector reform initiatives. His dissertation research is on fostering culturally-appropriate institutional development to strengthen transparency and accountability in governance in fragile states and aboriginal First Nations in Canada.

Michelle Thelen-Steere • Blessed is the Spot: Pilgrimage and Sacred Place as Catalysts for the Evolution of Character Towards Personal Transformation (see John Steere for abstract)

MICHELLE THELEN-STEERE, MA, CMHT, is a Clinical Counselor, Hypnotherapist, and Cognitive Behavioral Instructor. She holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Counseling and is a Certified Hypnotherapist. Her specializations are in cross-cultural, women's, disability, and childhood and adult abuse issues and she has worked with clients from over 40 countries.

Richard Thomas, Ramya Naraharisetti, and Aaron Yates • An Interview with Dr. Richard Thomas: Scholarship, Learning and Action in the Field of Race Relations – Two Generations of Bahá'ís Reflect upon Key Racial Issues

This session will explore what Bahá'ís have learned and are learning about correlating Bahá'í teachings and practices of racial unity with current issues of race. Using the perspectives of two generations of Bahá'ís, two younger and one older, we will reflect on some of the major contributions that Bahá'ís have made to the scholarship and generation of knowledge in the field of race relations. We will collectively explore topics such as: the guidance of the Universal House of Justice on race, racial justice in the current Five Year Plan, diversity in neighborhoods with core activities, the lens of race when participating in discourses of society, etc.

RICHARD W. THOMAS is professor emeritus of history at Michigan State University. He is author and co-author of several books on race relations and the African-American experience including: *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*, and *Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress*. He has been a member of the Bahá'í Faith since 1962.

Farida Vahedi • Generation of Knowledge and Evolution of Thought, Public Opinion and Policy through Engagement with Wider Society

“Only as effort is made to draw on insights from His Revelation, to tap into the accumulating knowledge of the human race, to apply His teachings intelligently to the life of humanity, and to consult on the questions that arise will the necessary learning occur and capacity be developed.” (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010, para. 25)

Understanding the complex and perpetual process of generating, applying and diffusing knowledge for the betterment of society will be the focus of the presentation. It will draw on the experiences accrued in India through efforts aimed at promotion of public discourse in the areas of equality of men and women, and the complementary role of science and religion in development.

Farida Vahedi • May Knowledge Grow in Our Hearts: Applying Spiritual Principles to Development Practice—The Case of Seva Mandir

During this breakout session, the intent is to understand the complexity of the process of generating knowledge by articulating the principles and the process of applying spiritual principles to development thought and practice. Looking at the learning accrued from an action research project undertaken jointly by Seva Mandir, a well-established NGO in Rajasthan and the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity we are able to see how this NGO was helped to examine its attempts at the process of change and transformation in individuals and social structures through a lens that analyzed it from a spiritual perspective. The publication is available on www.globalprosperity.org.

FARIDA VAHEDI serves as the director of the Office of Public Affairs in India. Since 1999 she has been engaged in collaboration with the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity in promotion of public discourse on the spiritual dimension of various aspects of development—from the equality of men and women, to effective governance, to science and religion.

Deborah Vance • Tacit Knowledge and Shared Belief: Where's the Communicating Self?

In my 20 years of teaching and research, I've come to recognize spiritual truth that resides in academic theories, and use those theories to empower students. My teaching is informed by media theories and cultural theories, many of which embody spiritual understanding. This presentation looks at two courses I teach that require students to act on their social environment to enlighten themselves and others about how culture functions and to identify ways to improve it. In other words, from the classroom I send students into the community, and in the community they must put their learning into action.

DEBORAH CLARK VANCE is Associate Professor at McDaniel College in Maryland. She has worked in print and broadcast media. She studied media at Northwestern University and intercultural communication in graduate school at Howard University. She teaches classes in media and culture, with an interest in how individuals create their identities.

Matthew Weinberg and Kim Naqvi • What is Bahá'í Scholarship?

This interactive workshop will explore the meaning and role of Baha'i scholarship, identifying and challenging our preconceptions. We will examine past and recent guidance, and examples of scholarship in the both the Baha'i community and in the greater community with a particular focus on the theme of the conference.

MATTHEW WEINBERG served as Research Director of the Bahá'í International Community, in Haifa, Israel, from 1995-2002. He also was a senior analyst with the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment in Washington, DC, where he directed several studies in the areas of environmental and technology policy.

Rainn Wilson • The Matrix and Morality

This multimedia presentation explores the teachings of the Faith on the true nature of our spiritual reality by examining "The Matrix," a popular science fiction film that has a spiritual message at its heart.

RAINN WILSON, actor, director and writer, is best known for portraying Dwight Schrute on NBC's "The Office," for which he received three Emmy nominations. He is the co-founder of the Bahá'í-inspired website and media company, SoulPancake, and the co-author of the New York Times bestselling book of the same name.

Aaron Yates • An Interview with Dr. Richard Thomas: Scholarship, Learning and Action in the Field of Race Relations – Two Generations of Bahá'ís Reflect upon Key Racial Issues (see Thomas for abstract)

AARON YATES serves as coordinator for North America of the seminars for university students offered by the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity (ISGP). ISGP, created by the Universal House of Justice in 1999, is dedicated to building capacity in individuals, groups and institutions to contribute to prevalent discourses concerned with the betterment of society.

Xiaojie Zheng • Art: Its Creative, Spiritual and Healing Dimension

Through art I attempt to focus on the Bahá'í message of unity and the realization of the oneness of all humankind with works created for the public space since 2009. In this presentation I will examine each of those works, providing photos of each, along with the story of my inspiration, the creative process, and the response from viewers.

XIAOJIE ZHENG received an art education degree in China. She pursued postgraduate studies in fine art in Holland and art gallery management in the United States. Her work has been exhibited and collected by institutions and private parties. Xiaojie is a guest instructor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and manages New Era Art studio.

Artists Performing

BELLE BLUE, 20 year old Bella Blue is a pop/r&b singer with a great love of Motown. Her current single "Walking On Air" features Snoop Dogg and she works in association with Sony and Universal Records. She was raised in Los Angeles in a musical Bahá'í family, singing gospel and devotional music.

MJ CYR blurs the lines. She creates music which transcends genre and beyond the norms of Devotional and secular music. Her latest release, "Canopy", is an exceptional example of devotional music made for the masses. Her musical styles range from electronic to americana. She is not to be missed.

THE DESCENDANTS, Gia Sky, Bella Blue and Aubrey Wood are The Descendants. These established solo artists came together to create 'A Divine Collaboration' by setting direct passages from the Bahá'í writings to music. They have dedicated the album to their grandparents who first embraced the Bahá'í Faith in the 1950-60's.

WALTER HEATH is the real deal. Born the son of a preacher man, into a family of singers, music shaped his life. His soulful melodies, smooth voice, and consummate musicianship make him a musical force to be reckoned with. He has released albums both Bahá'í inspired and devotional.

JAMEY HEATH literally grew up in recording studios surrounded by a successful musical family. He has spent his career producing and writing for many Grammy Award winning artists. He believes that ultimately service to humanity is his only reason for having the gift of music.

NATASHA HUGGER started her dance training at the age of 10. Her professional career includes dancing for Bette Midler, Debbie Allen and Kenny Ortega. When not dancing or teaching Pilates, you can find her serving her local community.

KC PORTER is an exceptionally prolific songwriter and producer. His music has graced numerous award winning albums from Santana to Michael Jackson. He is also responsible for some of the best loved Bahá'í inspired albums. He just released his first devotional album entitled "Where The Soul is Born".

Conference Organization

<i>Arts Programme</i>	Jon Rezin
<i>Children/Junior Youth Program</i>	Goli Atai
<i>Conference Coordinator</i>	Parvin Rowhani
<i>Logistics</i>	Shahram Shahriari
<i>Photography</i>	Madlin Misaghi
<i>Programme Chairs</i>	Lisa Dufraimont, Martha Schweitz
<i>Publicity & Promotion</i>	Ron Carrigan, Farshad Jahed
<i>Registration</i>	Nilufar Gordon, Mary Ann Purdue
<i>Reporting</i>	Mojgan Sami
<i>Security</i>	Ruth Ann Markusen
<i>Stage Décor</i>	Newport Beach Flora – Farhad Manshadi
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Fariborz Jafari
<i>Technical Director</i>	Geoff Cohen
<i>Ushers</i>	Jalil Rohanifard
<i>Volunteers</i>	Mojgan Manshadi

The ABS Executive Committee extends its deep appreciation to all those who have assisted in the preparation and running of this conference. Our heartfelt thanks are also due to the many volunteers who contributed their service and have worked so hard to make this conference a success.

With special thanks to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Irvine.