

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

November 21, 2016

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Qawl

Dearly loved Friends,

In March of this year, as the various presidential campaigns steadily gathered momentum, we paused to circulate a letter to the community stressing the vital importance of our avoiding involvement in partisan politics. With the election behind us, the heated political discourse the campaigns generated shows no sign of abating and is continuing across the entire spectrum of our society. We therefore think it appropriate to once again share an extract from our March letter with you:

"The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." Such was the emphatic statement of Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One of All Ages, well over a century ago. On such a foundation was the Bahá'í community raised, a community that welcomes all and excludes none, a community that seeks to further His vision of a world at peace and in unity—a world in which every last barrier dividing the human family one from another will at last and for all time be thrown down.

This is a presidential election year in our country and the campaign season is now in high gear. It is timely, therefore, to remind ourselves of some of the many potent statements in our writings stressing the importance of avoiding partisan politics—activity that by its very nature undermines the goal of unity. The Universal House of Justice has explained:

"By becoming involved in political disputes, the Bahá'ís instead of changing the world or helping it, would themselves be lost and destroyed. The world situation is so confused, and moral issues which were once clear have become so mixed up with selfish and battling factions, that the best way Bahá'ís can serve the highest interests of their country . . . is to sacrifice their political pursuits and . . . fully support the divine system of Bahá'u'lláh."

The beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, advised the Bahá'ís of North America—and, through them, believers across the world—thus:

"Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations. . . . In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system." . . .

Distancing oneself from partisan behavior by no means implies a lack of concern for the welfare of society, nor should it be thought to minimize the sincere desire on the part of many of our fellow citizens to build a just, free, and peaceful world through political action. We differ from them on process—on how such a vision can most effectively be realized. Unity and peace cannot be achieved through means in conflict with their end. For a fuller discussion of the Bahá'í attitude toward politics and the manner in which our community works for the security and welfare of society, we invite you to study the Supreme Body's letter on this issue, addressed to the Bahá'ís of Iran on March 2, 2013, which we have attached for your convenience.

The aforementioned letter from the Universal House of Justice is again attached for your reference. Study of the letter should remind us all of the unprecedented, infinitely precious opportunity we have—as members of the growing community of the Greatest Name—to build an entirely new world civilization founded on the divine principles of unity and justice. Underscoring the greatness of this Cause and the mightiness of this Day of God, Bahá'u'lláh urges us to turn aside from the disputatiousness and turmoil of the present hour:

Forbear ye from concerning yourselves with the affairs of this world and all that pertaineth unto it, or from meddling with the activities of those who are its outward leaders. . . .

It behoveth, likewise, the loved ones of God to be forbearing towards their fellow-men, and to be so sanctified and detached from all things, and to evince such sincerity and fairness, that all the peoples of the earth may recognize them as the trustees of God amongst men. . . .

Considering this most mighty enterprise, it beseemeth them that love Him to gird up the loins of their endeavor, and to fix their thoughts on whatever will ensure the victory of the [C]ause of God. . . . Wert thou to consider, for but a little while, the outward works and doings of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, thou wouldst fall down upon the ground, and exclaim: O Thou Who art the Lord of Lords! I testify that Thou art the Lord of all creation, and the Educator of all beings, visible and invisible. I bear witness that Thy power hath encompassed the entire universe, and that the hosts of the earth can never dismay Thee, nor can the dominion of all peoples and nations deter Thee from executing Thy purpose. I confess that Thou hast no desire except the regeneration of the whole world, and the establishment of the unity of its peoples, and the salvation of all them that dwell therein.

Dearest friends, far from allowing ourselves to descend into the cynicism, divisiveness, and despair that are increasingly characterizing the mood and conversation of our society, let us show a different spirit and model of behavior to our fellow citizens, full of assurance in the bright future that beckons us in the transcendent vision of the Supreme Manifestation of God.

Our prayers for your happiness and well-being are unceasing.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

Attachment