



THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF SOUTH AFRICA

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To the rising generations in the beloved land of South Africa,

Dearly loved Youth,

Heroic figures have illustrated over centuries passed that heroism is consonant with sacrifice, resolve and courage. Many heroines and heroes who traced the path of righteousness in our own country and so too in the chronicles of the Bahá'í Faith, were youthful souls. One such exalted figure, the Báb arose with tenacity to deliver His message after declaring His mission at the tender age of twenty-five, and many of His followers who spread His teachings were themselves in the prime of youth. This intrepid band of young believers set into motion a pattern in which generations of youth have participated in the advancing processes aimed at transforming society, which has since been uninterrupted.

Nearly five years have passed since youth conferences were held across the globe, inviting rising generations to ponder on their contribution to building their communities anew. What a bounty it was to witness hundreds of South African youth recognize the significance of selfless service, which manifested itself in their conversations about cultivating a new pattern of community life. They came to further understand their vital role in this enterprise, motivating them to commit more time to the pressing tasks ahead, especially in assisting those younger than themselves. Connected by their commitment to service, these young souls formed such profound bonds of friendship that have since served as a source of strength and mutual encouragement.

The energy from these gatherings have been channelled into community building efforts across the country, with youth inspiring those around them with their selflessness and dedication to the spiritual and material transformation of their community. Conscious of the formidable task ahead of them and the power of collective action, these youth continue to share the vision encapsulated at the conferences with their peers so that they too can partake in the bounty of releasing the power of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. Their efforts are guided by their desire to see a united society, one where women and men work shoulder to shoulder; where educational processes are accessible to all; where the complementary knowledge systems of science and religion are used to understand reality; and where truth is distinguished from false-hood, allowing justice to prevail.

Inspired by these principles of the Faith, so many Bahá'í youth and their friends have been assuming greater responsibility for the betterment of their communities. In this bewildered world

where the forces of materialism face us daily, youth are constantly being required to think about where to direct their energy and how to use their time. Often the need for personal gain and self-satisfaction, so commonly portrayed in the media, can supersede the call for selfless service. Yet when the motivation to contribute to society in a constructive and selfless manner takes precedence, the results have been striking.

Youth remain the most promising and energetic elements of any society with responsibilities no less demanding than those generations before them. What may differ are the tasks that lie ahead of today's youth, especially those young souls who have recognized the magnificence of Bahá'u'lláh's healing Message and its application to combating the inequalities so rife in present-day society. With only three years left of a worldwide quarter-century effort, tens of thousands of Bahá'í youth and their likeminded peers are once more called on to the fore to intensify their efforts in transforming neighborhoods and villages in their countries.

In this beloved country, each of you brave young souls have the privilege of significantly contributing to the advancement of a Cause so noble in its imperatives. *What will your offering be in this unique period of youth that will inspire generations to come?* We hope that your earnest reflections foster an appreciation for the opportunities of selfless service ahead of you "...to advance humanity toward the nobility of its true and intended station." Undoubtedly your youthful energy will give new expression to the common framework for action the Bahá'í community has come to appreciate. May the spirit of sacrifice, so profound in your spiritual forebears, imbue your every effort in constructing a nation characterized by solidarity, justice and compassion. We eagerly look to your generation to become the heroic stalwarts of our time.

Be assured of our prayerful remembrances of you, our abiding love, admiration and confidence in your ability to rise to unprecedented heights of service. Lest you forget that "...divine assistance is promised to all those who arise to serve humankind in response to the galvanizing call of Bahá'u'lláh."

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