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CHRISTOPHER BUCK

Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Bahá'í Pluralist

History remembers Alain Locke (1885–1954) as the first African-American Rhodes Scholar (1907); as the “Dean” of the Harlem Renaissance (1919–34);¹ and, increasingly (as archival sources yield their treasures), as a Bahá'í race-amity leader who used his academic training in philosophy to further race relations. The first achievement is individual; the second is “national” (particularly with respect to black nationalism); the third is national, with international implications. Locke edited *The New Negro*, first published in 1925 and acclaimed as the “first national book” of African Americans.² One scholar writes that “Only a few claims regarding the Harlem Renaissance are uncontested: that *The New Negro* stands as the ‘keystone,’ the ‘revolutionary’ advertisement, and the ‘first national book’ of African America is one of them.”³ Locke is rightly recognized as the “chief intellectual rival” of W. E. B. Du Bois, a Harvard-trained sociologist and civil-rights leader.⁴ Indeed, Locke’s role is somewhat analogous to that of Martin Luther King:⁵ Whereas King championed the civil rights of African Americans through nonviolent civil disobedience, Locke did so through a process known as “civil rights by copyright.”⁶ During the Jim Crow era (approximately 1883 to 1964), when laws throughout the United States afforded blacks no effective legal or political recourse, Locke used the arts as a means for winning the respect of the white majority

Copyright © 2005 by Christopher Buck. For their invaluable help, I wish to thank the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel; Roger Dahl, Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; Gayle Morrison, coordinating editor of the Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project and author of *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America*; and the staff at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, particularly Dr. Thomas C. Battle, Director; Joellen ElBashir, Curator of Manuscripts; and Donna M. Wells, Prints and Photographs Librarian. This article draws on my recently published book *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* but includes new materials that have since come to light.

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and for calling to its attention the need for fully democratizing democracy and for Americanizing America by extending full equality to all minorities.⁷

What history has largely forgotten about Locke is that he was a member of the Bahá'í Faith, which he embraced in 1918—the same year he was awarded a doctorate from Harvard University. Given the Bahá'í Faith's commitment to eliminating racial prejudice, it is time to begin appreciating the range of contributions Locke made,

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between 1918 and 1954, to race relations, both in the Bahá'í sphere and in the civic sphere. The role that the Bahá'í Faith played in Locke's life and thought, however, is difficult to determine. Ignoring that in-

fluence altogether is to discount the Bahá'í factor completely. Yet overstating the Bahá'í influence may not be accurate either. Arguing synergy may be the most equitable analysis.

One way to approach Locke's place in history is to focus on specific places that exerted the most profound influences on him. Harvard, Harlem, Haifa—place names that represent Locke's special involvement in philosophy, art, and religion—are keys to understanding his life and thought. *Harvard* prepared Locke for distinction as the first black Rhodes Scholar in 1907, and, in 1918, awarded him a doctorate, securing his position as chair of the Department of Philosophy at Howard University from 1927 until his retirement in 1953. *Harlem* was the Mecca of the Harlem Renaissance, whereby Locke, as a spokesman for his race, revitalized racial solidarity and fostered the group consciousness among African Americans that proved to be a necessary precondition of the civil-rights movement of the 1960s. *Haifa* is the World Center of the Bahá'í Faith, Locke's adopted religion. Until recently Locke's membership in the Bahá'í Faith has been the least understood aspect of his life. During the Jim Crow era, at a time when black people saw little possibility for interracial harmony, this new religion offered hope through its “race-amity” efforts, which Locke was instrumental in organizing. These three spheres of Locke's activities—the academy, the art world, and spiritual society—converge to create a composite picture of him as an integrationist whose model was not assimilation but rather “unity through diversity” (the title of one of his essays published in *The Bahá'í World* in 1930).⁸

Early Life, 1885–1911

When asked, Locke would always say that he was born in 1886.⁹ But he was actually born a year earlier in Philadelphia—on September 13, 1885.¹⁰ Although his birth name was “Arthur,” his parents may have actually named him “Alan.”¹¹ At the age of sixteen Locke adopted the French spelling “Alain” (close to the American pronunciation of “Allen”) and added a middle name, “LeRoy” (probably because he was called “Roy” as a child).¹² He was the only son of Pliny Locke and Mary (Hawkins) Locke, who had been engaged for sixteen years before they married.¹³

A child of Northern Reconstruction and of privilege, the young boy led a somewhat sheltered life and was given an enlightened upbringing and a private education. He was raised as an Episcopal and during his youth became enamored with classical Greek philosophy.¹⁴

Because in infancy Locke was stricken with rheumatic fever, which permanently damaged his heart, he was predisposed to music and reading. He dealt with his “rheumatic heart” by seeking “compensatory satisfactions” in books, piano, and violin.¹⁵ Only six years old when his father died, Locke was sent by his mother to an Ethical Culture School—a pioneering experimental program of pedagogy devised by Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), who had opened the first kindergarten. By the time Locke entered Philadelphia’s Central High School in 1898, he was already an accomplished pianist and violinist. In 1902, after completing high school, Locke prepared to continue a family tradition by becoming a teacher. He enrolled in the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy for Men, graduating second in his class in 1904.¹⁶ During the same year he entered Harvard College with honors, one of a very few African-American undergraduates.

During the “golden age of philosophy at Harvard,” Locke studied at a time when Josiah Royce, William James, George Herbert Palmer, Hugo Münsterberg, and Ralph Barton Perry were on the faculty. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, Locke won, in 1907, the Bowdoin Prize—Harvard’s most prestigious academic award—for an essay entitled “The Literary Heritage of Tennyson.”¹⁷ He also

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passed a qualifying examination in Latin, Greek, and mathematics for the Rhodes Scholarship, which had been established in

1904 by diamond magnate Cecil Rhodes. Locke completed his four-year undergraduate program at Harvard in only three years, graduating magna cum laude with a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy.¹⁸ Then he made history and headlines in May 1907 as America’s first—and only, until the 1960s—African-American Rhodes Scholar. While his Rhodes Scholarship provided for study abroad at Oxford, it was no guarantee of admission. In his Rhodes Scholarship interview, Locke stated that one of his objectives for studying abroad, in addition to “the further education,” was seeing “the race problem from the outside.” “I don’t want to run away from it,” he said, “but I do want to see it in perspective.”¹⁹ Rejected by five Oxford colleges because of his race, he was finally admitted to Hertford College, where he studied from 1907 to 1910.

To broaden his perspective and to see racism within its global context, Locke joined the Oxford Cosmopolitan Club, whose members included students from India, Norway, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, and other countries. One member, Pa Ka Isaka Sime, eventually founded the African National Congress of South Africa. Formed around 1905, the Cosmopolitan Club was possibly the first such club to be established at a European university. The Club grew in significance when Locke became involved in 1907, since he brought valuable knowledge about cosmopolitan clubs in the United States.²⁰



ALAIN LOCKE

(standing third from the right) with fellow Oxford Cosmopolitan Club members sometime between 1907 and 1910. Because such clubs were new to European universities and because of Locke's familiarity with U.S. clubs, his presence brought life to the Oxford Cosmopolitan Club. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

But perhaps the most significant influence on Locke at Oxford was his friendship with fellow Harvard graduate Horace Kallen, a Sheldon traveling fellow, who also matriculated at Oxford in 1907. During his senior year at Harvard, Locke had met Kallen, a German-born Jew who was a graduate teaching assistant in George Santayana's course on Greek philosophy in which Locke had enrolled. Thus began a lifelong friendship. Kallen recorded some valuable personal observations about Locke as a young man. For example, he noted that Locke was "very sensitive, very easily hurt."²¹ Moreover, Locke strenuously insisted that "I am a human being," that "We are all alike Americans," and that his "color ought not to make any difference."²² Locke corroborates his views in a letter he wrote to his mother, Mary Locke, shortly after receiving his Rhodes Scholarship, insisting that "I am not a race problem. I am Alain LeRoy Locke."²³ In that era, unfortunately, color made an enormous difference. The social reality of the first decade of the twentieth century, and for many decades thereafter, was that Locke's self-image was a wish-image for his entire life, dying as he did less than a month after the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Kallen has described a racial incident over a Thanksgiving Day dinner hosted at the American Club at Oxford, a dinner to which Locke was not invited because of some "gentlemen from Dixie who could not possibly associate with Negroes."²⁴ Elsewhere Kallen's accounts are more blunt: "[W]e had a race problem because the Rhodes Scholars from the South were bastards. So they had a Thanksgiving dinner which I refused to attend because they refused to have Locke."²⁵ After inviting Locke

to tea in lieu of the Thanksgiving dinner, Kallen wrote that, “tho’ it is personally repugnant to me to eat with him . . . but then, Locke is a Harvard man and as such he has a definite claim on me.”²⁶ Ironically, Kallen harbored some of the same prejudices as the Southern Rhodes Scholars who shunned Locke—but not to the same degree. “As you know, I have neither respect nor liking for his race,” Kallen wrote in an earlier letter, “but individually they have to be taken, each on his own merits and value, and if ever a Negro was worthy, this boy is.”²⁷ Locke was deeply wounded: “Now, the impact of that kind of experience left scars,” remarks Kallen.²⁸ In fact, even before they left the United States for Oxford, these same Southern Rhodes Scholars who refused to invite Locke to the Thanksgiving dinner had “formally appealed to the Rhodes trustees to overturn Locke’s award”—but to no avail.²⁹

At Oxford, or possibly in an earlier conversation at Harvard, Locke asked Kallen, “[W]hat difference does the difference [of race] make?” “In arguing out those questions,” Kallen recounted, “the phrase ‘cultural pluralism’ was born.”³⁰ While Kallen coined the term in an historic conversation with Locke, Locke developed the concept of cultural pluralism into a full-blown philosophical framework for the betterment of African Americans and has recently been acknowledged as “the father of multiculturalism.”³¹

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Distancing himself from Kallen’s purist and separatist conceptions, Locke was part of the cultural-pluralist movement that flourished between the 1920s and the 1940s. Indeed, during his time at Oxford he experienced a crucial transformation: At entrance, Locke saw himself as a cultural cosmopolitan; on exit, he had resolved to be a race leader, although he did not know how he would fulfill that role. While at Oxford, Locke founded the African Union Society and served as its secretary, thereby greatly broadening his international contacts in Africa and the Caribbean, which proved valuable in later life.

So acutely did the Thanksgiving Day dinner incident traumatize Locke that he left Oxford without taking a degree and spent the 1910–11 academic year studying Kant at the University of Berlin and touring Eastern Europe. During his stay in Berlin, he studied the Austrian school of anthropology, known as philosophical anthropology, under the tutelage of Franz Brentano, Alexius von Meinong, Christian Freiherr von Ehrenfels, Paul Natorp, and others. Locke much preferred Europe to America. Indeed, there were moments when Locke resolved never to return to the United States. Reluctantly, he did so in 1911, evidently in late April. However, Locke intended to return to Oxford at a later date (when exchange rates had dropped low enough) “to take the Oxford degree.”³²

During the spring and summer of that year, Locke would taste first-hand the scarifying hatred of the racialized Deep South, an experience that would be a turning point in his life. From March 1 to March 8,³³ he accompanied famed black educator, race leader, and organizer of black businesses Booker T. Washington, the most

powerful black man in America at the time, on a trip possibly to further Washington's mission of promoting economic self-reliance among African Americans. They traveled through Florida, beginning in Pensacola, although there is evidence that their travels together lasted two months.³⁴

In addition to the time he spent traveling with Washington, Locke continued to travel in the Deep South for six months, presumably through the summer of 1911. There were moments when he feared for his life. As a direct result of his experience with racism in the South, he resolved to promote the interests of African Americans—and thereby of all Americans—using culture as a strategy. At Oxford, Locke knew he was preparing himself to be a race leader. But he did not know in what capacity he would lead. During this trip in the South, Locke began to see how he could use culture to promote race pride and equality, for, unlike politics, culture is a means of expressing and communicating the aspirations and genius of a people.

Later, in an unpublished autobiographical note, Locke reflected on the circumstances that led to the momentous decision in his life and career:

Returning home in 1911, I spent six months travelling in the South—my first close-range view of the race problem—and there acquired my life-long avocational interest in encouraging and interpreting the artistic and cultural expression of Negro life, for I became deeply convinced of its efficacy as an internal instrument of group inspiration and morale and as an external weapon of recognition and prestige. . . . My connection with the literary and art movement, styled in 1925 the “New Negro” renaissance, was thus a logical outcome of this artistic creed and viewpoint.³⁵

Evidence suggests that Locke may have attended the First Universal Races Congress held on July 26–29, 1911, at the University of London, for his later comments indicate how deeply the Congress impressed him. In 1916, in the first of five historic lectures on race relations delivered at Howard University, Locke spoke of the Congress' inspiring him to advance its social goals:

Ladies and Gentlemen: Ever since the possibility of a comparative study of races dawned upon me at the Races Congress in London in 1911, I have had the courage of a very optimistic and steadfast belief that in the scientific approach to the race question, there was the possibility of a redemption for those false attitudes of mind which have, unfortunately, so complicated the idea and conception of race that there are a great many people who fancy that the best thing that can possibly be done, if possible at all, is to throw race out of the categories of human thinking.³⁶

It is possible that Locke may have first heard about the Bahá'í Faith during the 1911 Congress, for its overarching purpose was to promote greater rapport between East and West, a corollary being the objective of countering the worldwide racism of the era. While British Bahá'ís participated in the event, of far greater moment was the invitation the organizers sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, to speak before the Congress. Declining to do so because of circumstances, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent a message to be read in absentia to the conference participants. In it, He said, in part:

This Congress is one of the greatest of events. It will be forever to the glory of

England that it was established at her capital. . . . Let Brotherhood be felt and seen among you; and carry ye its quickening power throughout the world. It is my prayer that the work of the Congress will bear great fruit.³⁷

In addition to the reading of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s message, another occurrence indicates that Locke may have heard about the Bahá’í Faith during the London Congress. *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London* includes a report containing a question put to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

One of the organizers of the Races Congress present spoke of the Western ideals of Bahá’u’lláh [1817–92, the Founder of the Bahá’í Faith] as differing from those of former prophets which were tinged with the ideas and civilization of the East. He then asked whether Bahá’u’lláh had made a special study of Western writings, and founded his teachings in accordance with them.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá laughed heartily, and said that the books of Bahá’u’lláh, written and printed sixty years ago, contained the ideals now so familiar to the West, but, at that time, they had not been printed or thought of in the West.³⁸

The report attests independently that information about the Bahá’í Faith was presented in at least two different forms (‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letter and His oral dismissal of the imputation of the Western provenance of Bahá’u’lláh’s principles), presumably in a single session. If Locke was present in the auditorium at that time, he surely would have learned of the Bahá’í religion on that occasion.

Early Academic Career, 1912–18

On September 3, 1912, with the help of Booker T. Washington, Locke joined the faculty of the Teachers College at Howard University.³⁹ As an Assistant Professor of the Teaching of English and Instructor in Philosophy and Education, Locke taught literature, English, education, and ethics—and later, ethics and logic—at Howard University, although he did

not have an opportunity to teach a course on philosophy until three years later. In the spring of 1915, Locke proposed a course on the scientific study of race and race relations. His

rationale was that “a study of race contacts is the only scientific basis for the comprehension of race relations.”⁴⁰ But most of the white ministers on Howard University’s Board of Trustees rejected his petition because they felt that controversial subjects such as race had no place at a school whose mission was to educate young, black professionals. Although there was some support for Locke’s proposed lectures (from Dean Kelly Miller of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dean Lewis Moore of the Teachers College, and Dr. William Sinclair, a member of the Board of Trustees), according to Locke biographer Jeffrey C. Stewart, Howard’s white president in 1916, the Reverend S. M. Newman, “was particularly discouraging of the idea that Negro or race studies should be developed at Howard.”⁴¹ However, in 1915 and 1916 the Howard chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Social Science Club sponsored a two-year extension course of public lectures, which Locke called “Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Race.”⁴²

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In the lectures Locke deconstructed the pseudo-scientific view of race as “ethnic fictions” and reconstructed a social conception of race that represented a further development of the thought of cultural anthropologist Franz Boas, the acknowledged father of American anthropology, whom Locke considered a “major prophet

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of democracy.”⁴³ Locke rejected the logic of Jim Crow that froze blacks into a racial stereotype and gave legal sanction to segregation under the infamous 1896 U.S. Supreme

Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.⁴⁴ In assessing the “contemporary relevance” of these historic lectures, Stewart states that “No contemporary thinker has blended together in one statement or theory the many diverse insights Locke offers in *Race Contacts*.”⁴⁵

During the 1916–17 academic year, Locke took a sabbatical from Howard University to become the Austin Teaching Fellow at Harvard. During the sabbatical, Locke wrote his 263-page doctoral dissertation entitled “The Problem of Classification in



ALAIN LOCKE

circa 1918, the year he received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard University and the year he became a Bahá'í. Locke is wearing his Harvard University doctoral cap and gown and his Oxford University hood. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

[the] Theory of Values: or an Outline of a Genetic System of Values,” evidently an extension of an earlier essay he had written at Oxford.⁴⁶ Harvard professor of philosophy Josiah Royce had originally inspired Locke’s interest in the philosophy of value. Of all the major American pragmatists to date, only Royce had written a book dealing with racism—*Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems*, published in 1908. In formulating his own theory of value, Locke synthesized the Austrian school of value theory (Franz Brentano and Alexius von Meinong) with American pragmatism (George Santayana, William James, and Royce), the anthropology of Boas, and Kant’s philosophical theories of aesthetic judgment.

The essence of Locke’s philosophy of values is captured in the first sentence of his 1935 essay “Values and Imperatives,” which summarizes his dissertation: “All philosophies, it seems to me, are in ultimate derivation philosophies of life and reality; products of time, place and situation, and thus systems of timed history rather than timeless eternity.”⁴⁷ In anchoring philosophy in social reality, Locke studied the determinative role of values in the human experience and developed a

typology of values. In his dissertation Locke recapitulated his “psychology of value-types”: “We have therefore taken values classed, rather roughly and tentatively, as Hedonic, Economic, Aesthetic, Ethical and Moral, Religious, and Logical, aiming to discover in terms of the generic distinctions of a value-psychology their type-unity, character, and specific differentiae with respect to other types.”⁴⁸ Later, in “Values and Imperatives,” Locke reduces his taxonomy to four types of values: (1) Religious; (2) Ethical/Moral; (3) Aesthetic/Artistic; (4) Logical/Scientific.⁴⁹

Conversion to the Bahá’í Faith and Early Bahá’í Activities, 1918–23

When Locke was awarded his doctorate from Harvard in 1918, he emerged as perhaps the most exquisitely educated and erudite African American of his generation. The year 1918 was another turning point in Locke’s life, for he found a spiritual home in the Bahá’í Faith, a new world religion the central message of which is the unity of the human race. Previous scholarship has failed to establish the precise date when Locke embraced the Bahá’í Faith. Bahá’ís had assumed that his conversion happened during the early 1920s, although documentary evidence was lacking for such

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a date,⁵⁰ and non-Bahá’í scholars had reached the same conclusion. In his Yale doctoral dissertation on Locke, Stewart wrote that, “In the 1920s, Locke joined the Bahai movement and formalized his separation from orthodox Christianity.”⁵¹ Stewart cited as proof two letters in the Howard University archives from Locke to long-time friend and patron Mrs. Charlotte Mason in 1932 and 1936; yet, on close inspection, these letters include no mention of the Bahá’í Faith.⁵²

But the National Bahá’í Archives has a Bahá’í Historical Record card that Locke filled out in 1935 when the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, the national Bahá’í governing body of the two countries, conducted a Bahá’í census, mailing the forms in triplicate to all Bahá’ís through their Local Spiritual Assemblies (local Bahá’í governing bodies) and other channels.⁵³ Under “Date of acceptance of the Bahá’í Faith,” Locke entered the year “1918.”⁵⁴

Locke was one of seven black respondents from the Washington, D.C., Bahá’í community to complete the card.⁵⁵ In “Place of acceptance of Bahá’í Faith,” Locke entered “Washington, D.C.” He personally completed and signed the card “Alain Leroy Locke” (in the space designated, “19. Signature”). In a letter dated June 28, 1922, written shortly after the death of his mother, Locke states: “Mother’s feeling toward the [Bahá’í] cause, and the friends who exemplify it, was unusually receptive and cordial for one who had reached conservative years,—it was her wish that I identify myself more closely with it.” Locke honored her wish. At the end of the letter, Locke speaks of the Bahá’í Faith as “this movement for human brotherhood.”⁵⁶

Locke, as many American Bahá’ís had been doing for more than two decades, undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1923 (he went again in 1934).⁵⁷ He immortalized his first pilgrimage in a travel narrative entitled “Impressions of Haifa,” published in 1924 and endorsed by Shoghi Effendi (1896–1957, appointed by

‘Abdu’l-Bahá to succeed Him as the Head of the Bahá’í Faith) as being “very good and sufficient.”⁵⁸ The fact that Haifa and the Bahá’í shrines—not Bethlehem and Jerusalem, centers of Christian pilgrimage—were his principal destinations attests to the primacy of Locke’s religious identity as a Bahá’í rather than as a former Episcopalian, as he was always designated in brief biographical notices of him published during his lifetime.⁵⁹

Contributions to Bahá’í Race Unity Efforts, 1921–30

In 1921, three years after becoming a Bahá’í, Locke began to be actively involved in Bahá’í efforts to promote the oneness of humankind, a central tenet of the Bahá’í Faith. He took a leading role in the Bahá’ís’ “race-amity” initiatives sparked by the bloody race riots during the “Red Summer” of 1919. He helped plan and execute

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and also participated in the Bahá’ís’ first, third, and fourth Race Amity conventions, which were held in Washington, D.C., May 19–21, 1921; New York City, March 28–30, 1924;

and Philadelphia, October 22–23, 1924. There is no record of his being involved with the second convention, which was held at the Central High School in Springfield, Massachusetts, on December 5 and 6, 1921. A photograph of the event shows the auditorium filled to capacity, with African Americans likely in the majority of those attending.⁶⁰

During his tenure on the Bahá’í race-amity committees from 1924 through 1930, Locke made a number of significant contributions. In 1929, while he was serving on the National InterRacial [*sic*] Amity Committee for the 1929–30 Bahá’í year (his sixth national committee appointment), the National Spiritual Assembly asked the committee to draft a letter to U.S. First Lady Mrs. Herbert Hoover. She had held a reception for the families of Congressmen, including the wife and daughter of black Congressman Oscar De Priest, and was being severely criticized for it in conservative sectors. The Committee’s annual report for that year notes that the letter, which explained the Bahá’í teachings on race relations, was adopted by the N. S. A. [National Spiritual Assembly] and by its secretary sent to Mrs. Hoover along with a copy of the *Bahá’í World*. This letter commended Mrs. Hoover and her distinguished husband on their stand for peace and humanitarian service. It was pointed out that interracial amity is the basis of universal peace.⁶¹

The significance of the letter to Mrs. Hoover lies in the fact that the committee on which Locke served drafted, for the benefit of the First Lady, a formal statement of Bahá’í teachings on race relations. It is not known whether President Hoover (1929–33) personally read the letter.

Role in the Harlem Renaissance

In 1925, seven years after he became a Bahá’í, two years after his first Bahá’í pilgrimage, and a year after he participated in the fourth Bahá’í race-amity confer-

ence, Locke was presented with an opportunity to further his determination to be a race leader—this time in Harlem—by using culture to foster race pride and race unity. In 1924 Howard University had granted him a sabbatical leave to collaborate with the French Archaeological Society of Cairo, the highlight of his trip to the Sudan and Egypt being the reopening of the tomb of Tutankhamen in Luxor. Locke was able to schedule his first pilgrimage to Haifa in conjunction with the trip. The two trips had been some time in the planning, for while he was in Berlin (a favorite European summer destination until the Nazi rise to power), a visa, dated August 23, 1923, permitting him to travel to “Egypt, Palestine & United Kingdom,” was added to his 1922 passport.⁶² Locke published a travel narrative of his visit to Egypt called “Impressions of Luxor” (echoing the title of his 1924 “Impressions of Haifa”). The preface to the Egypt account notes that Locke had “spent several months in Europe, the Near East, Egypt, and the Sudan, 1923–1924.”⁶³

When Locke returned from Egypt to his university duties, he found that a student strike had thrown the Howard University campus into an upheaval. In June 1925, because of his support for an equitable faculty pay scale and for student demands to end mandatory chapel and ROTC, the University’s white president James Stanley Durkee fired Locke.

Since he was no longer gainfully employed, Locke needed to find a patron to support his intellectual work. He found a benefactor in Charlotte R. Osgood Mason, a wealthy white woman, who, through Locke, also became a patron to poet Langston Hughes and novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston.⁶⁴ For thirteen years Mason financed Locke’s annual trips to Europe, enabling him to begin building his invaluable collection of African art, which he later bequeathed to Howard University. Locke corresponded faithfully with Mason until her death in 1946.

But Locke also needed a project. Hence he used what would become a year away from Howard University to write and edit a work that would launch the Harlem Renaissance. He had conceived it a year earlier when the editor of the *Survey Graphic* asked him to produce an issue on New York City’s Harlem, an area with a large concentration of African Americans. The special issue, *Harlem, Mecca of the New*



ALAIN LOCKE

the prime organizer and the acknowledged “Dean” of the Harlem Renaissance, in 1925 published *The New Negro: An Interpretation of Negro Life*, a landmark in black literature that was hailed as “the first national book” of African Americans. Courtesy, Locke Papers/Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Negro, Locke recast as an anthology called *The New Negro: An Interpretation of Negro Life* and published it in December 1925.⁶⁵ A landmark in black literature, the book was an instant success. Locke contributed five essays: the “Foreword,” “The New Negro,” “Negro Youth Speaks,” “The Negro Spirituals,” and “The Legacy of Ancestral Arts.” *The New Negro* also featured five white contributors, making this artistic tour de force a genuinely interracial collaboration, with much support from white patronage (not without some strings attached, however).

The Harlem Renaissance—known also as the New Negro Movement, of which Locke was both the prime organizer and spokesman—sought to advance freedom and equality for blacks through art. The term “New Negro” dates back to *A New Negro for a New Century* published in 1900 by Booker T. Washington, N. B. Wood, and Fannie B. Williams.⁶⁶ From 1925 onward, Locke engendered what was called “race pride” among African Americans by fostering a new sense of the distinctiveness of black culture and its enrichment of the American experience for all Americans, thus giving concrete expression to the idea that had come to him during his travels in the South in 1911. Not merely a great creative outburst during the Roaring Twenties, the Harlem Renaissance was a highly self-conscious modern artistic movement. In an unpublished report on race relations, Locke stated that the New Negro Movement “deliberately aims at capitalizing race consciousness for group inspiration and cultural development. But it has no political or separatist motives, and is, in this one respect, different from the nationalisms of other suppressed minorities.”⁶⁷

In its mythic and utopian sense, Harlem was the “race capital” and the largest “Negro American” community in the world. The Harlem Renaissance, consequently,

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presented itself as a microcosm or self-portraiture of African-American culture to America and to the world. With its epic scope and lyric depth, the movement was an

effusion of art borne of the everyday African-American experience. The Harlem Renaissance would establish Locke as the elder statesman of African-American art in later life when his towering prestige wielded enormous authority.

In principle, Locke was an avowed supporter of Du Bois’ idea of a cultural elite (the “Talented Tenth”) but differed from Du Bois’ insistence that art should serve as propaganda.⁶⁸ Even so, Locke hoped the Harlem Renaissance would provide “an emancipating vision to America” and would advance “a new democracy in American culture.” He spoke of a “race pride,” “race genius,” and the “race-gift.”⁶⁹ “Race pride” was to be cultivated through developing a distinctive culture, a hybrid of African and African-American elements. For Locke, art ought to contribute to the improvement of life—a pragmatist aesthetic principle sometimes called meliorism, or the betterment of oppressed minorities. But the Harlem Renaissance was more of an aristocratic than democratic approach to culture. Criticized by some African-American contemporaries, Locke himself came to regret the Harlem Renaissance’s excesses of exhibitionism as well as its elitism. Its dazzling success was short-lived.

However, *The New Negro* did succeed in shaping a group identity and a collective self-esteem among African Americans. This transformation—if not a formation—of group consciousness was an absolutely necessary developmental stage that, three decades later, made mass mobilization of African Americans under Martin Luther King, Jr., far more possible. In his preface to the reissue of *The New Negro* anthology in 1968, Robert Hayden (a well-known Bahá'í and America's first African-American poet-laureate), echoes Locke's vision of the Harlem Renaissance, which was rooted in the transracial experience of America: "The Negro Renaissance was clearly an expression of the *Zeitgeist*, and its writers and artists were open to the same influences that their white counterparts were. What differentiated the New Negroes from other American intellectuals was their race consciousness, their group awareness, their sense of sharing a common purpose."⁷⁰

A little-known fact is that, shortly after *The New Negro* was published, Locke went on an extended trip in the South, giving public lectures on the Bahá'í vision of race unity. Speaking of Locke's imminent departure for a lecture tour throughout the Midwest and the Deep South, one Bahá'í described Locke's deep commitment as a Bahá'í:

In regard to Dr. Locke—he is at present in N.Y. but has written me saying he "will keep his promise (to go South) in spite of many things". . . .

The lecture opportunities Dr. Locke has must be the nucleus for his work for the Cause and of course he must proceed in perfect freedom. When he looked over the list of educators supplied by Mrs. [Keith Ransom-] Kehler, saying he knew about one third of them personally, he remarked smilingly[,] "How surprised they will be to know me as a Bahai". His understanding of the way he will be at liberty to work coincided with my own idea of the best way to work—to meet his audiences upon their common ground and afterward convey the Message which has moved his life. . . .

Dr. Locke does not attend Bahai meetings in Washington, but is deeply and truly a Bahai. It has been only by appealing to him in the most liberal spirit that I have been able to win his consent to do this work, and it is my hope that once under the Divine Protection of those having "arisen" he may go on to greater services.⁷¹

Between February 6 and sometime in March (or perhaps May) 1926, Locke spoke in Cleveland and Cincinnati and at the Dunbar Forum at Oberlin College and at Wilberforce University, all in Ohio; in Indianapolis, Indiana; and before "the best Negro institutions in the Middle South and Northern Florida," including the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls and the Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School near Orlando, Florida.⁷² Records indicate that Locke spoke (albeit sporadically) at Bahá'í-sponsored events from 1921 through 1952—a period of some thirty-one years. Locke's last-known public talk (fireside) on the Bahá'í Faith was given on March 23, 1952, in Toronto, Canada.

Locke's return to Howard University was fostered by Du Bois. In a letter dated May 5, 1927, he wrote to Howard administrator Jesse E. Moorland, lobbying for Locke's reinstatement: "Mr. Locke is by long odds the best trained man among the younger American Negroes."⁷³ In June 1927 Howard University's new African-

American president, Mordecai W. Johnson, reinstated Locke, although Locke did not resume teaching there until June 1928, for during the 1927–28 academic year, he was an exchange professor at Fisk University.

Locke was subsequently promoted to chair of Howard University's Philosophy Department. He is credited with having first introduced into the university's curriculum the study of anthropology, philosophy, and aesthetics. A pioneer in the Negro theater movement, and continuing to emphasize the role of culture in race identity, Locke coedited in 1927 the first African-American drama anthology, *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama*, which consisted of twenty one-act plays and dramatic sketches—ten by white playwrights (including Eugene O'Neill) and ten by black dramatists.⁷⁴

Advisor for Translation of the Book of Certitude, 1930

The year 1930 found Locke serving the Bahá'í Faith as an editor. Shoghi Effendi had begun to translate (from Persian and Arabic into English) the Kitáb-i-Íqán (the Book of Certitude), the preeminent doctrinal work of Bahá'u'lláh. Recognizing Locke's literary abilities, Shoghi Effendi invited him to comment on his translation.⁷⁵ In the Alain Locke Papers preserved in the Moorland–Spingarn Research Center at Howard University are two letters to Locke, dated February 15 and July 5, 1930, and written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary at that time, Ruhi Afnan. In the first letter Ruhi Afnan told Locke that Shoghi Effendi was calling on him as the person “best fitted to render him [Shoghi Effendi] an assistance” in giving critical feedback on the translation itself. Shoghi Effendi requested that Locke “go over it [the translation] carefully, studying every sentence—its structure as well as choice of words—and giving him [Shoghi Effendi] your [Locke's] criticism as well as constructive suggestions that would make it more lucid, English [*sic*] and forceful.” Ruhi Afnan added: “Shoghi Effendi is fully aware of the many duties you have and how pressing your time is, and had he known of an equally fitting person he would surely have saved you the trouble. Yet he finds himself to be compelled.”⁷⁶ The first letter accompanied the first half of the translation that Shoghi Effendi sent to Locke. The second half of the Kitáb-i-Íqán was mailed later.

Locke did as Shoghi Effendi requested. In an undated letter, postmarked June 11, 1930, Locke wrote to Shoghi Effendi:

As a whole the translation is a triumph of labor and insight into another language. It reads well and euphonically—and for so complicated a sentence structure is unusually clear. I know the need for full and literal translation, and therefore did not dare suggest certain cuts and shortening which would be desirable from the English and American readers' point of view. It is a difference primarily between the structure of the Eastern language and those of the West. The coordinate phrases give us the impression of prolixity—and the constant repetitions do not always increase the effectiveness of the writing. Perhaps you can consider this question, and obtain some condensation by joining several coordinate statements in subordinate clause constructions or for phrases use the mechanical advice [*sic*] of hendiadys occasionally. Still, those who would really be interested in this inspired discourse will not be impatient anyhow. I look forward to the time when

we may all see it in print. We shall be ever grateful to you for your devoted labours in making it accessible. May it speed the Cause to the ears of the learned and influential!⁷⁷

Shoghi Effendi acknowledged Locke's editorial assistance in a letter dated July 5, 1930, again written on his behalf: "Though they were not so many, he [Shoghi Effendi] found the suggestions you gave most helpful." Ruhi Afnan also reported that "Shoghi Effendi has already incorporated your suggestions and sent his manuscript to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada for publication."⁷⁸ Shoghi Effendi, as was his frequent custom, added a postscript in his own hand:

My dear co-worker:

I wish to add a few words expressing my deep appreciation of your valued suggestions in connexion with the translation of the Iqan. I wish also to express the hope that you may be able to lend increasing assistance to the work of the Cause, as I have always greatly admired your exceptional abilities and capacity to render distinguished services to the Faith. I grieve to hear of the weakness of your heart which I trust may through treatment be completely restored. I often remember you in my prayers and ever cherish the hope of welcoming you again in the Master's home.

Your true brother,
Shoghi.⁷⁹

Shoghi Effendi's request for Locke's editorial assistance and his gracious and personal postscript to his July 5, 1930, letter further dispels doubts about Locke's commitment to the Bahá'í Faith or the depth of his convictions. Locke lived at a time when it was considered

strange to be anything except a Protestant or a Catholic, the two religions that dominated the United States. To be a Bahá'í in

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any public way was to risk one's professional and social standing. Locke's predicament was by no means an isolated phenomenon. Under the pressure of religious conformism within the sphere of American assimilationism, and in the absence of religious pluralism as we know it today, all religious minorities faced the same problem. Being a Jew during this period, for example, was to be an outsider. Thus Locke opted for prudence, studiously avoiding references to the Bahá'í Faith in his professional life, but nationalizing and internationalizing his Bahá'í principles in his academic and scholarly works.

Yet three of Locke's essays, in addition to the frequently reprinted "Impressions of Haifa" written after his 1923 pilgrimage, were published in *Bahá'í World* volumes, which were intended for the general public and civic and governmental leaders and served as his public testimony of faith: "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," *The Bahá'í World, Volume IV* (1933); "The Orientation of Hope," *The Bahá'í World, Volume V* (1936); and "Lessons in World Crisis," *The Bahá'í World, Volume IX* (1945).⁸⁰ But it was not until an article about the Bahá'í Faith called "Bahá'í Faith: Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate" appeared in the October

1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine that Locke's Bahá'í identity was publicized in the popular media. The article prominently featured Locke's photograph together with a caption, reading "Alain Locke, Howard professor, joined movement in 1915 [*sic*], wrote for the Baha'i Magazine."⁸¹

Locke and Adult Education

In 1936, under the auspices of the Associates in Negro Folk Education (ANFE), Locke launched the *Bronze Booklets on the History, Problems, and Cultural Contributions of the Negro* series, written by such leading African-American scholars as



ALAIN LOCKE

An undated studio portrait by James Allen, nearly identical to the photograph published in *Ebony* magazine in 1952 with an article about the Bahá'í Faith, publicly identifying Locke as a Bahá'í for the first time in the popular media. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

Sterling A. Brown and Ralph Bunche. Altogether, Locke published nine Bronze Booklets between 1936 and 1942. Intended for adult education and, beyond that, for mass education, they became a standard reference for teaching African-American history. A problem arose when ANFE commissioned Du Bois to contribute one of the Bronze Booklets but exercised its veto power over Locke when it refused to publish Du Bois' manuscript, which was deemed too radical. Locke himself wrote two Bronze Booklets (Nos. 2 and 3), both published in 1936: *The Negro and His Music* and *The Negro Art: Past and Present*.⁸²

In 1940 ANFE issued Locke's *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and the Negro Theme in Art*, which was Locke's best known work after *The New Negro* and the leading book in its field.⁸³ In 1942 Locke coedited with Bernhard J. Stern an anthology entitled *When Peoples Meet: A Study of Race and Culture*.⁸⁴ The book was international in scope and promoted interracial and ethnic contacts through intercultural exchange. In November 1942 Locke served as guest editor for a special edition of *Survey Graphic*, a volume entitled *Color: Unfinished Business of Democracy*.⁸⁵

In 1943 Locke took a leave of absence from Howard University to serve as Inter-American Exchange Professor to Haiti under the joint auspices of the American Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations and the Haitian Ministry of Education. Toward the end of Locke's stay, Haitian President Élie Lescot personally decorated him with the National Order of Honor and Merit, grade of Commandeur. While in Haiti, Locke wrote *Le rôle du nègre dans la culture Américaine* [The Role of the Negro in American Culture], the nucleus of a grand project that

Locke believed would be his magnum opus.⁸⁶ However, he was not able to finish the project, which Margaret Just Butcher, daughter of Howard University colleague and close friend Ernest E. Just, completed after Locke's death and published in 1956 as *The Negro in American Culture*.⁸⁷ Hence it is not considered to be one of Locke's authentic works.

In 1944 Locke became a charter member of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, which published its annual proceedings. During the 1945–46 academic year, Locke was Visiting Professor at the University of Wisconsin, and in 1947, Visiting Professor at the New School for Social Research.

One of his students at Wisconsin, Beth Singer, described Locke as being “a quiet, extremely scholarly, and well organized lecturer; I do not recall his speaking from notes.” After mentioning the fact that Locke was a Bahá'í, Singer noted that, “Dr. Locke seemed somehow aloof, and my friends and I were pretty much in awe of him.”⁸⁸

FOR THE 1946–47 TERM,
LOCKE WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT
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OF A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE ORGANIZATION.

For the 1946–47 term, Locke was elected president of the American Association for Adult Education, the first black president of a predominantly white organization. His active role in the adult-education movement has already been established in the nine-volume Bronze Booklet series.

Locke as a National Figure, 1930s–40s

Four instances will suffice to demonstrate Locke's profile as a national figure. First, Locke was an unpaid consultant to the CBS educational series “Americans All—Immigrants All.” This twenty-six-week series highlighted a distinct ethnic group each week and traced its history and contributions to America. On December 18, 1938, “The Negro in The United States,” the sixth episode, was broadcast nationally on CBS. Locke, working independently but in conjunction with Du Bois, revised and ghost-wrote much of the script.⁸⁹ Under the auspices of the Department of the Interior, the series was distributed in transcription form for classroom use.

On December 20, 1940, Locke was invited to chair a concert, which was part of a larger program commemorating “the seventy-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the thirteenth amendment [abolishing slavery] to the Constitution of the United States.”⁹⁰ Sponsored by the Music Division of the Library of Congress and the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation, the program featured a concert of traditional Negro folk music, performed by the Golden Gate Quartet and accompanied by Joshua White on guitar and vocals. Locke gave a short opening lecture on “The Negro Spiritual” and served as the event's “time-keeper”—probably a euphemism for master of ceremonies.⁹¹ Poet Sterling A. Brown introduced the blues and ballads, with musicologist Alan Lomax commenting on the “reels” and work songs that the quartet performed. Sound recordings of the concert were made in the Library of Congress' Coolidge Auditorium in Washington, D.C., and produced by the Music Division and the Recording Laboratory of the Library of Congress.⁹²



ALAIN LOCKE and U.S. FIRST LADY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

at the May 7, 1941, dedication of the predominantly African-American South Side Community Art Center in Bronzeville, a mostly black area in Chicago. The dedication ceremony, at which Mrs. Roosevelt and Locke spoke, was broadcast nationally on CBS radio. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

distinguished civil-rights attorney Dr. Leon A. Ransom, who was Thurgood Marshall's mentor at Howard University) and Howard University's president, Mordecai W. Johnson, spoke on the topic "Is There a Spiritual Basis for World Unity?" This is precisely the kind of question that would interest both a Bahá'í and the more progressive members of the listening audience. Moderated by George V. Denny, Jr., the town meeting's host, the show was broadcast nationally from the Howard University campus in Washington, D.C. A transcript of the show was published shortly afterward in the June issue of "Town Meeting: Bulletin of America's Town Meeting on the Air," the program's regular newsletter.⁹³

Ever vigilant in terms of the need to translate the ideal into the real, Locke stressed the pragmatic challenges that the quest for world unity faces:

The fact is, the idealistic exponents of world unity and human brotherhood have throughout the ages and even today expected their figs to grow from thistles. We cannot expect to get international bread from sociological stone whether it be the granite of national self-sufficiency, the flint of racial antagonisms, or the adamant of religious partisanship. . . . The question pivots, therefore, not on the desirability of world unity, but upon the more realistic issue of its practicability."⁹⁴ Locke's observations are further evidence of his tireless efforts to foster improved race relations, whether within or outside the Bahá'í community.

On May 7, 1941, Alain Locke appeared with U.S. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt at the dedication of Chicago's South Side Community Art Center, a predominantly African-American center established in cooperation with the Illinois Federal Art Project, with funding from two of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Depression-era programs, the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP). Located at 3831 South Michigan Avenue in the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville area, this Chicago landmark is the sole survivor of the more than one hundred centers established in the United States by the WPA/FAP during the 1930s and 1940s. Locke was one of nine after-dinner speakers. The dedication ceremony, at which both Locke and the First Lady spoke, was nationally broadcast on CBS Radio.

On May 28, 1942, on a national education show called "America's Town Meeting of the Air," Locke, together with a panel of fellow Howard University professors (Doxey Alphonso Wilkerson and

Maturity as a Philosopher

Strangely enough, Locke did not publish a formal philosophical essay until he was fifty. “Values and Imperatives” appeared in 1935. In fact, this was Locke’s only formal philosophical work between *The New Negro* published in 1925 and 1947. Apart from his doctoral dissertation in 1918, Locke published only four major articles in a philosophy journal or anthology: “Values and Imperatives” (1935); “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy” (1942); “Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace” (1944), and “Pluralism and Ideological Peace” (1947).⁹⁵

Bridging Harvard, Harlem, and Haifa

By Locke’s own admission, one of his objectives as a philosopher or cultural pluralist was to “translate” Bahá’í principles effectively into secular values. Although he is remembered primarily for being the spokesperson for the Harlem Renaissance, his philosophical essays and his Bahá’í essays contain obvious thematic resonances and some shared vocabulary. Locke’s prescription for world peace and the unity of humankind can be seen as an extension of his Bahá’í values. In an unpublished letter to Shoghi Effendi in 1934, Locke spoke of the “factionalism of race” in America and of his resolve to be “a modifying influence to radical sectionalism and to increasing materialistic trends—and in this indirect way to serve the [Bahá’í] Cause and help forward the universal principles.”⁹⁶ In his 1933 essay “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle,” Locke effectively “translated” Bahá’í ideals “into more secular terms” so that “a greater practical range will be opened up for the application and final vindication of the Bahá’í principles” in order to achieve “a positive multiplication of spiritual power.”⁹⁷

LOCKE’S PRESCRIPTION FOR WORLD PEACE
AND THE UNITY OF HUMANKIND
CAN BE SEEN AS AN EXTENSION
OF HIS BAHÁ’Í VALUES.

In another effort to express his Bahá’í values in secular form, Locke forged a vital link between American democracy and world democracy. In “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy,” presented at the Second Symposium Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion and published in 1942, Locke wrote that “The intellectual core of the problems of peace . . . will be the discovery of the necessary common denominators and the basic equivalences involved in a democratic world order or democracy on a world scale.”⁹⁸ In an unpublished Bahá’í essay, Locke wrote that the “gospel for the Twentieth Century” and the prospect of “social salvation” must first address the “fundamental problems of current America,” which are “materiality and prejudice.” The sad irony is that America, which is “the land that is nearest to material democracy” happens to be the land that “is furthest away from spiritual democracy.”⁹⁹ In the same essay, Locke quotes a prophecy by Bahá’u’lláh, recorded by Cambridge University Orientalist Edward A. Browne, in an historic interview:

That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled. . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family.¹⁰⁰

Bahá'u'lláh's vision incorporates the three "basic corporate ideas" of nation, race, and religion about which Locke writes in his 1944 paper "Moral Imperatives for World Order." In that brief but poignant essay, Alain Locke seems to echo and universalize Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic words in secular form: "The moral imperatives of a new world

"THE MORAL IMPERATIVES OF A NEW WORLD ORDER
ARE AN INTERNATIONALLY LIMITED IDEA
OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, A NON-MONOPOLISTIC
AND CULTURALLY TOLERANT CONCEPT OF
RACE AND RELIGIOUS LOYALTIES FREED
OF SECTARIAN BIGOTRY."

order are an internationally limited idea of national sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry."¹⁰¹ Of course, one cannot prove a direct

relationship between Locke's faith-based Bahá'í principles and his social philosophy. But the resonances and the synergy are there, unmistakably—two facets of Locke's moral genius, which is panoramic in its global vision.

Other Achievements

Among his many other accomplishments, Locke served on the editorial board of the *American Scholar*; was philosophy editor for the *Key Reporter* of Phi Beta Kappa; and contributed regularly to various national magazines and journals, most notably *Opportunity* (1929–40) and *Phylon* (1947–53). He also wrote articles on Negro culture and Harlem for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from 1940 through 1954. From 1948 through 1952, Locke taught concurrently at the City College of New York and Howard University. In the 1951–52 academic year, Howard granted Locke a leave of absence to produce *The Negro in American Culture*, conceived in Haiti but left unfinished.

In June 1953 Locke retired from Howard University with the rank of professor emeritus and with the university's conferring an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. On June 5, 1953, in his unpublished acceptance speech, Locke said:

In coming to Howard in 1912, I was fortunate, I think, in bringing a philosophy of the market place not of the cloister. For, however much a luxury philosophy may be in our general American culture, for a minority situation and a trained minority leadership, it is a crucial necessity. This, because free, independent and unimposed thinking is the root source of all other emancipations. . . . A minority is only safe and sound in terms of its social intelligence.¹⁰²

In July 1953 Locke moved to New York. For most of his life he had sought treatment for his rheumatic heart. Hence it was not a surprise when he died of heart failure in Mount Sinai Hospital on June 9, 1954. On June 11 at Benta's Funeral Home in Harlem, Locke's memorial was presided over by race-relations leader Dr. Channing H. Tobias, with cremation following at Fresh Pond Crematory in Little Village, Long Island.¹⁰³

The brief notice that appeared in the *Bahá'í News* in 1954 reported that "Quotations from the Bahá'í Writings and Bahá'í Prayers were read at Dr. Locke's funeral."¹⁰⁴ Orations in honor of Locke were given by literary critic William Stanley

**ALAIN LOCKE**

(sixth from the right) and 1950 Nobel Peace Prize winner Ralph Bunche (seventh from the right) at the installation of charter members of Phi Beta Kappa at Howard University on April 8, 1953, the year Locke retired from teaching. Official Howard University photograph by Scurlock. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

Braithwaite; 1950 Nobel Peace Prize winner Ralph Bunche; social worker and collector of black Americana C. Glenn Carrington; black ambassador to white America W. E. B. Du Bois; psychologist of race and psychiatrist Benjamin Karpman, who studied criminal sexual psychopaths at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C.; philosopher Yervant Krikorian from City College, City University of New York; and educator William Stuart Nelson. “[H]is contributions,” remarked Karpman, reflecting on Locke’s legacy, “go beyond race; they belong to all humanity.” “He had all but emancipated himself from the consciousness of color,” Karpman continued, adding that “In his presence, one did not feel that he was speaking to a Negro or to a particular human known as American, but to an urbane cosmopolitan.” Of the difference he made in this world, Karpman said of Locke that “his influence has penetrated millions of human souls”;

He gave the Negro an individuality to a greater degree than the race had ever known before. He gave him reasons to dream, visions that could be attained; he gave him a sense of belonging, a cause to struggle for. More than anyone else, he contributed to removing from the Negro the stigma of inferiority and gave him a social and human dignity as Emerson and Thoreau a century before gave

it to the American. He gave the Negro a consciousness of being a part of mankind in general, a partner in man's creative progress. Many a Negro today walks with a straighter gait, holding his head high in any company, because of Alain Locke.¹⁰⁵

Reflections

Alain Locke's connections to Harvard, Harlem, and Haifa shaped his roles as race leader, social philosopher, and Bahá'í pluralist. As a race leader, he ingeniously enhanced race pride and race image through the cultural diplomacy of African-American arts. As a social philosopher, he was a race-relations leader, both then and now, with a concern for national and international unity. "[T]here is the possibility," he said, "of a fine collaboration spiritually between these two groups [African Americans and whites] with their complementary traits and qualities. They have great spiritual need, the one of the other, if they will so see it."¹⁰⁶ About Locke's social and spiritual significance, Horace Kallen said of his lifelong friend and colleague: "What Booker T. Washington had been to the Negro and the American idea in the field of material skills and material achievement, Alain Locke was in the field of the spirit."¹⁰⁷ As a Bahá'í pluralist, Locke advocated what he calls



ALAIN LOCKE

An undated studio portrait made later in Locke's life. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

"the salvation of democracy." He wrote that "Bahá'í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized."¹⁰⁸ In promoting "racial democracy" as one component of his comprehensive model of "world democracy"—what he would later refer to as a "new Americanism"—Locke placed race relations in a global perspective.¹⁰⁹

With respect to his Bahá'í identity, Locke chose a prudent course. He could be a private Bahá'í at a public meeting, or a public Bahá'í at a private meeting, or a Bahá'í known to the Bahá'ís but not to the rest of his audience, or somewhere in between. He seems to have felt, considering the time in which he lived, that it was better to be a circumspect Bahá'í in a position of prestige and influence than a vocal Bahá'í who might command no audience and leave no public legacy. As a public intellectual, Locke's position as a race leader and a champion of democracy meant that he needed to be universal in his ethos. Moreover, he felt that his public persona and celebrity status depended on his remaining mainstream as one of the nation's foremost and most distinguished African Americans. To have come out too publicly

and too forthrightly as a Bahá'í would surely have affected his career adversely and his position as a professor of philosophy at Howard University. Yet his entire adult life bore eloquent witness to his tireless promotion of universal Bahá'í ideals. In the twilight of his life, *Ebony* magazine, for a short time, thrust him into the national limelight as a Bahá'í when it published an article about the Bahá'í Faith that prominently featured his photograph.

Concurrently or singly, Locke thus fulfilled three distinct but overlapping roles. As a race leader, a social philosopher, and a Bahá'í pluralist, Locke promoted racial nationalism, cultural pluralism, and Bahá'í universalism. What is remarkable is how adroitly he connects values with social issues. Equally remarkable is how he internationalizes the problem of race relations. With power and clarity, Locke has synergized faith and philosophy to generate a secular perspective that universalizes the Bahá'í social ideals of racial harmony and world unity.

1. Charles S. Johnson originally christened Locke the “‘Dean’ of this younger group” of Harlem Renaissance writers (Johnson to Locke, March 4, 1924, Alain Locke Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, hereafter MSRC, cited in Charles W. Scruggs, “Alain Locke and Walter White: Their Struggle for Control of the Harlem Renaissance,” *Black American Literature Forum* 14.3 (Autumn 1980): 92. See also George Hutchison, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard UP, 1995) 390, and David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin, 1998) xxviii.

2. Mark Helbling, *The Harlem Renaissance: The One and the Many* (Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood P, 1999) 46. See also Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Boni, 1925; New York: Simon, 1927; New York: Atheneum, 1968, with new preface by Robert Hayden; New York: Touchstone, 1999, with “Introduction” by Arnold Rampersad).

3. Eric King Watts, “African American Ethos and Hermeneutical Rhetoric: An Exploration of Alain Locke’s *The New Negro*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88.1 (Feb. 2002): 23, reprinted as chapter 7 in *African American Communication & Identities: Essential Readings*, ed. Ronald L. Jackson II (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003). Houston A. Baker, Jr., first characterized *The New Negro* as “our first national book” (*Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987] 85).

4. Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1995) 24.

5. See Christopher Buck, “Alain Locke,” *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*, Supplement XIV, ed. Jay Parini (Farmington Hills, MI, USA: Scribner’s/Gale, 2004) 195–219, and Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, vol. 18 (Los Angeles: Kalimát P, 2005) 1.

6. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* xxviii.

7. Jim Crow laws, named after a pre-Civil War minstrel-show character, were late nineteenth-century statutes passed by U.S. Southern (and other) states that created an American apartheid. Although slavery had been abolished in 1863, in 1883 the Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, reflecting the widespread white-supremacist attitudes of the day and effectively demolishing the foundations of post-Civil War Reconstruction. In 1896 the high court promulgated the “separate but equal doctrine” in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, leading to a profusion of Jim Crow laws. By 1914, every Southern state had established two separate societies—one white, one “colored.” Segregation was enforced by the creation of separate facilities in virtually every sector of civil society—in schools, streetcars, restaurants, health-care institutions, and cemeteries. In 1954 this racial caste system was successfully challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which declared segregation in the public schools unconstitutional. The Jim Crow system was finally dismantled by civil-rights legislation enacted between 1964 and 1968. See Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Oxford: Oxford UP,

2004); Thomas Adams Upchurch, *Legislating Racism: The Billion Dollar Congress and the Birth of Jim Crow* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2004); and David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004).

8. See Alain Locke, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume IV, April 1930–1932* (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1933; Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980) 372–74, reprinted in Alain Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, ed. Leonard Harris (Philadelphia, PA, USA: Temple UP, 1989) 133–38—hereafter *Philosophy of Alain Locke* (though Harris' reference in 133n should be emended to read "Volume IV, 1930–1932," not "V, 1932–1934."

9. Such was the case when Locke filled out his Bahá'í Historical Record card in 1935. Under "Birthdate," he entered "September 13, 1886" (Bahá'í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, National Bahá'í Archives [hereafter NBA]). For information on Bahá'í Historical Record cards, see Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America: Early Expansion, 1900–1912, Volume 2* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995) 412; and "Baha'i Historical Record," *Baha'i News* 94 (August 1935): 2.

10. See the document issued by the "Department of Public Health and Charities, Bureau of Health" (City Hall, Philadelphia), in Alain Locke Papers, Box 164-1, Folder 1, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. See also Leonard Harris, "Rendering the Text," in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 3–27.

11. See Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).

12. Although Locke's middle name was formally spelled "LeRoy," in a full signature he would write "Leroy," as he did on his Bahá'í Historical Record card signature, where he wrote "Alain Leroy Locke," adding that he was called "Roy as a child" and "Alain from 16 on" (Bahá'í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, NBA).

13. See Michael R. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," in Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, ed., *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York: Norton, 1982) 398.

14. See Leonard Harris, "Introduction," in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 5.

15. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," in *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* 398.

16. Ernest Mason, "Alain Locke's Social Philosophy," *World Order* 13.2 (Winter 1978–79): 25.

17. See Jeffrey Conrad Stewart, "A Biography of Alain Locke: Philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance, 1886–1930," diss., Yale U, 1979, 53. Although his dissertation has never been published (except on demand through University Microfilms international), Stewart's biography of Locke may already be at press. See Jeffrey Conrad Stewart, *Beauty Instead of Ashes: The Life of Alain Locke, Patron Saint of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford UP, forthcoming).

18. See Nancy Fraser, "Another Pragmatism: Alain Locke, Critical 'Race' Theory, and the Politics of Culture," in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education*, ed. Leonard Harris (Lanham, MD, USA: Rowman, 1999) 6.

19. Locke, quoted in Stewart, "Biography of Alain Locke" 107.

20. See Jeffrey Stewart, *Beauty Instead of Ashes*; William O'Reilly, "The Oxford Cosmopolitan Club and the Migration of Nationalism" (Oxford: Oxford UP, forthcoming); and "Genealogies of Atlantic History," *Atlantic Studies* 1.1. (2004): 74–75.

21. Horace Kallen, quoted in Werner Sollors, "A Critique of Pure Pluralism," in *Reconstructing American Literary History*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986) 269.

22. Jeffrey C. Stewart, "Alain LeRoy Locke at Oxford: The First African-American Rhodes Scholar," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 31 (Spring 2001): 1. This article is an adaptation of Stewart's earlier article, "A Black Aesthete at Oxford," *Massachusetts Review* 34.3 (Autumn 1993): 411–28, which is fully documented.

23. Locke, quoted in Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, 2001) 391. Early in his career, Locke generally tended to spell his middle name formally as "LeRoy," informally relaxing the spelling to "Leroy" later in life.

24. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," *Journal of Philosophy* 54 (Feb. 28, 1957): 122, reprinted in Kallen, *What I Believe and Why—Maybe: Essays for the Modern World* (New York: Horizon P, 1971).

25. Kallen, quoted in Sollors, "Critique of Pure Pluralism," in *Reconstructing American Literary History* 269, quoted in Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard UP, 1998) 192.

26. Horace Kallen, letter to Barrett Wendell, Nov. 12, 1907, Barrett Wendell Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Am. 1907.1 (733), quoted in Menand, *Metaphysical Club* 391.

27. Kallen, letter to Barrett Wendell, October 22, 1907, Barrett Wendell Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Am. 1907.1 (733), quoted in Menand, *Metaphysical Club* 391.

28. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," *Journal of Philosophy* 54 (Feb. 28, 1957): 122.

29. Menand, *Metaphysical Club* 390; compare Stewart, "Alain LeRoy Locke at Oxford," *Massachusetts Review* 34.3 (Autumn 1993): 114.

30. "Cultural pluralism" is the precursor of "multiculturalism," which first gained currency in the 1970s. Locke and Kallen, quoted in Sollors, "Critique of Pure Pluralism," in *Reconstructing American Literary History* 269, quoted in Posnock, *Color and Culture* 192. Elsewhere, however, Kallen places this conversation at Harvard, rather than at Oxford: "As an expression in the American language 'cultural pluralism' is about 50 years old. I used it first around 1906 or 1907 when Alain Locke was in a section of a class at Harvard where I served as assistant to Mr. George Santayana" (Horace M. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," *Journal of Philosophy* 54 [Feb. 28, 1957] 119). Yet it was not until 1924 that Kallen first used the term in print, where his definition appears to be historical rather than prescriptive: "The standpoint of these essays can be described briefly as Cultural Pluralism. The outcome of the observation they embody is the view that democracy is an essential prerequisite to culture, that culture can be and sometimes is a fine flowering of democracy, and that the history of the relation of the two in the United States exhibits this fact" (Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States* [New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924, reprinted, New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Transaction, 1977] 11). Hence, while Kallen gets the credit for coining "cultural pluralism," it was Locke who effectively democratized the concept. In social fact, Locke's notion of cultural pluralism was far more socially integrated than Kallen's paradigm of hyphenated identity, which can all too easily degenerate into ethnic ghettoism. Locke's social philosophy was arguably a greater formative influence in shaping the present-day notion of multiculturalism than Kallen's. For Locke, cultural pluralism was essentially an expansion of democracy, extending its egalitarian principles from individual rights to group rights.

31. Charles Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman: Manifestos and National Identity," in *Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke* 175–76.

32. Locke to Sir Francis Wylie (the Rhodes secretary at Oxford), cited by Jeffrey C. Stewart, "Alain LeRoy Locke at Oxford: The First African-American Rhodes Scholar," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 31 (Spring 2001): 112–13.

33. In an undated letter to Washington, Locke writes: "My dear Doctor Washington, I am in receipt this evening of your kind permission to take Doctor Elbert's place in your party through Florida March 1st to 8th" (Locke, undated letter to Washington, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.). See also Washington, cablegram to Elbert, Feb. 26, 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.), and Stewart, "Introduction," in Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures of the Theory and Practice of Race*, ed. Jeffrey C. Stewart (Washington, D.C.: Howard UP, 1992) xxxix.

34. See Menand, *Metaphysical Club* 390.

35. Alain Locke, "Biographical Memo: Alain (LeRoy) Locke," Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).

36. Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations* 1.

37. ['Abdu'l-Bahá,] "Letter From 'Abdu'l-Baha to the First Universal Races Congress," *Star of the West* 2.9 (Aug. 20, 1911): 6, reprinted in *Record of the Proceedings of the First Universal Races Congress* (Orchard House, Westminster: King, 1911). See also (1) *Papers on Interracial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress Held at the University of London, July 26–29, 1911*, ed. Gustav Spiller (Boston: Ginn, 1912), reprinted in *Universal Races Congress, Inter-racial Problems: Papers*, ed. G. Spiller, intro. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Citadel P, 1970); (2) W. Tudor-Pole, "The First Universal Races Congress," *Star of the West* 2.9 (Aug. 20, 1911): 3–4, reprinted in the *Christian Commonwealth*, Aug. 2, 1911; (3) Paul Rich, "'The Baptism of a New Era': The 1911 Universal Races Congress and the Liberal Ideology of Race," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7.4 (1984): 534–50; and (4) Robert John Holton, "Cosmopolitanism or Cosmopolitanisms: The Universal Races Congress of 1911," *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 2.2 (April 2002) 153–70.

38. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London: Addresses and Notes of Conversations* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust UK, 1982 reprint) 68–69.

39. See Locke, letter to Washington, Sept. 16, 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.), and Locke to Washington, Sept. 16, 1912, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 12 (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1982) 9 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/btw/Vol.12/html/9.html>>, archived in the Library of Congress, Division of the Library of Congress as TLS, Con. 458, BTW Papers, DLC.

40. Quoted in Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," in *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* 399.

41. Jeffery C. Stewart, "Introduction," in Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations* xl–xli.

42. These lectures were later edited and published in Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*.

43. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations* 11. Locke called Boas a "Major Prophet of Democracy" in the title of his review of Boas' *Race and Democratic Society* published in *Journal of Negro Education* 15.2 (Spring 1946): 191–92. See also Mark Helbling, "Feeling Universality and Thinking Particularistically: Alain Locke, Franz Boas, Melville Herkskovits, and the Harlem Renaissance," *Prospects* 19 (1994): 289–314.

44. See Christopher Buck, "*Plessy v. Ferguson*," *The Encyclopedia of African American History*, ed. Leslie Alexander and Walter Rucker (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006, forthcoming.)

45. Stewart, "Introduction," in *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations* xlvi. Stewart's "Introduction" is a masterfully analytic history of Locke's lectures.

46. See Alain Locke, "The Problem of Classification in [the] Theory of Value: or an Outline of a Genetic System of Values," diss., Harvard, 1918.

47. Alain Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Sidney Hook and Horace M. Kallen (New York: Furman, 1935; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries P, 1968) 312.

48. Locke, "Problem of Classification" 169.

49. Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow* 43.

50. See Charlotte Linfoot, "Alain LeRoy Locke, 1886–1954," *The Bahá'í World: An International Record, Volume XIII, 1954–1963*, comp. the Universal House of Justice (Haifa, Israel: The Universal House of Justice, 1970) 895, where Linfoot states that "In the early 1920's Dr. Locke came into contact with the Bahá'í Faith in Washington, D.C."

51. Stewart, "Biography of Alain Locke" 22.

52. In his Yale dissertation on Locke ("Biography of Alain Locke," 22n30), Jeffrey Stewart writes: "In the 1920s, Locke joined the Bahai movement and formalized his separation from orthodox Christianity." Stewart cites two letters from Locke to Mrs. Charlotte (R. Osgood) Mason: a letter written on July 16, 1932, the tenth anniversary of Locke's mother's death, and one written on April 12, 1936 ("Locke to Mason, 4/12/36, 7/26/32, Gen. Corr., ALP, MSC, HU"). These letters are now catalogued as (1) Locke, letter to Mason, July 26, 1932, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-70, Folder 1 (July 1932) and (2) Locke, letter to Mason, Apr. 12, 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (Feb.-May 1936).

53. Locke received three copies of the Bahá'í Historical Record Card from Joseph F. Harley, III, secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. (Harley, letter to Locke, August 27, 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-76, Folder 13 [Bahá'í Faith]).

54. Bahá'í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, NBA.

55. The date "1918," given in the table compiled by Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982) 205 ("Table. Information about 99 black respondents among 1,1813 Bahá'ís surveyed, 1935–c. 1937, from Bahá'í Historical Record Cards in the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois"), is based on the personal data Locke provided on his Bahá'í Historical Record Card. But, since Morrison was not researching Locke for her book, she did not point out the significance for Locke studies of Locke's giving 1918 as the date on which he accepted the Bahá'í Faith.

56. Alain Locke, letter to Agnes Parsons, June 28, 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA.

57. As a spiritual obligation, Bahá'ís are strongly encouraged, finances permitting, to undertake a pilgrimage to Bahá'í holy places (principally clustered in and around Haifa and Acre, Israel) at least once in their lives. American Bahá'ís began making pilgrimages in 1898.

58. Shoghi Effendi, letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada Publishing Committee, Mar. 12, 1926, in "References to Dr. Alain Locke in Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi," attachment, The Universal House of Justice to Buck, July 16, 2001. See Alain Locke, "Impressions of Haifa," *Star of the West* 15.1 (April 1924): 13–14. The

article was reprinted three times in Bahá'í publications: (1) *Bahá'í Year Book, Volume One—April, 1925–April, 1926*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1926) 81, 83; (2) *The Bahá'í World (Formerly: Bahá'í Year Book): A Biennial International Record, Volume II, April 1926–April 1928*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928) 125, 127; (3) *The Bahá'í World (Formerly: Bahá'í Year Book): A Biennial International Record, Volume III, April 1928–April 1930*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930) 280, 282.

59. See Alain Locke, “Locke, Alain,” in *Twentieth Century Authors*, ed. Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycroft (New York: Wilson, 1942) 837.

60. See Roy Williams, “Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 5 and 6, 1921,” *Star of the West* 13.3 (Apr. 28, 1922): 51–55, 60–61; and Morrison, *To Move the World*, photograph opposite page 137.

61. Louis Gregory, Secretary, “Interracial Amity Committee” [1929–1930 Annual Report], *Bahá'í News Letter* 40 (Apr. 1930): 12. *The Bahá'í World* volume was possibly volume 2, published in 1928, containing a reprint of Locke’s “Impressions of Haifa.”

62. Visa, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-2, Folder 2 (Personal Papers—Passports, 1922, 1924).

63. Alain Locke, “Impressions of Luxor,” *The Howard Alumnus* 2.4 (May 1924): 74–78.

64. It is possible that Washington, D.C., Bahá'í Agnes Parsons introduced Locke to Mason. In a letter dated October 21, 1922, Locke wrote to Parsons, saying, “Thank you indeed for telling us of Mrs. Osgood and the work she is doing” (Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* xxviii).

65. For the special issue of *Survey Graphic*, see Alain Locke, “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro,” *Survey Graphic* 6.6 (Mar. 1, 1925) <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/harlem/contents.html>>. For the work launching the Harlem Renaissance, see Locke, ed., *New Negro*.

66. See Booker T. Washington, N. B. Wood, and Fannie B. Williams, ed., *A New Negro for a New Century: An Accurate and Up-to-date Record of the Upward Struggles of the Negro Race* (Chicago: American Publishing House, 1900).

67. Alain Locke, “Report on The Race Problem in the American Area,” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC. Box 164-43, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes[:] Christianity, spirituality, religion.) 3.

68. The term “Talented Tenth” was coined in 1896 by the Rev. Henry L. Morehouse, who envisioned a class of erudite and upright African Americans emerging as a vanguard for the Black community. The Talented Tenth was seen as the collective agent for social change. Du Bois gave the theory prominence in 1903 when he published his classic manifesto “The Talented Tenth.” The theory was simple yet profound: Cultivate the talents of the best and brightest African Americans, and they will advance the interests of all black Americans. At the other end of the social spectrum was the “submerged tenth”—an underclass of “criminals, prostitutes and loafers.” Later in life he refined his theory. In August 1948 Du Bois delivered his “The Talented Tenth Memorial Address” at Wilberforce University, in which he spoke of the “Guiding Hundredth,” which was his “new idea for a Talented Tenth.” Locke basically supported this elitist theory of social betterment. See Locke, “The Role of the Talented Tenth,” *Howard University Record* 12.7 (Dec. 1918): 15–18; and Buck, “Talented Tenth,” *Encyclopedia of African American History*. See also Alain Locke, “Art or Propaganda?” *Harlem* 1 (Nov. 1928): 12–13, and Richard Keaveny, “Aesthetics and the Issue of Identity,” in *Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke* 127–40.

69. These terms appear frequently throughout Locke’s writings. See, for example, Alain Locke, “Negro Youth Speaks,” in *New Negro* 47–53.

70. Robert Hayden, “Preface,” *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum, 1969) xi.

71. Louise Boyle, undated letter [late 1925] to Mrs. El Fledda Spaulding (“Chairman Teaching Committee”), Office of the Secretary Records, National Teaching Committee Files, National Bahá'í Archives, courtesy Roger Dahl, Archivist, and Gayle Morrison, Coordinating Editor, Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project.

72. In a letter dated January 20, 1926, to National Spiritual Assembly secretary Horace Holley, Mrs. El Fledda Spaulding made a passing reference to “a fine letter from Dr. Locke who starts on his trip February 6th” (Office of the Secretary Records, National Teaching Committee Files, National Bahá'í Archives, courtesy Gayle Morrison, e-mail to author, Aug. 9, 2005). Southern Regional Teaching

Committee (Louise D. Boyle, Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory), "Report of the Southern Regional Teaching Committee" (Apr. 15, 1926) 74, courtesy of Gayle Morrison, e-mail communication, Oct. 17, 2002.

73. W. E. B. Du Bois, letter to Jesse F. Moorland, May 5, 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921-1929).

74. Alain Locke and Montgomery Davis, ed., *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama* (New York: Harper, 1927).

75. See Christopher Buck, *Symbol and Secret: Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i Íqán*, Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, vol. 7 (Los Angeles: Kalimát P, 1995), republished <<http://www.bahai-library.org/books/symbol.secret>>.

76. Shoghi Effendi, letter written on his behalf by Ruhi Afnan to Locke, Feb. 15, 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-10, Folder 2 (Afnan, Ruhi).

77. Locke, letter to Shoghi Effendi, undated (postmarked June 11, 1930), in Research Department, Bahá'í World Centre, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, Dec. 26, 2001. A hendiadys ("one by means of two"), also known as a "figure of twinned," is the expression of an idea by the use of two independent words connected by "and" (nice and warm) instead of a combination of an independent word and its modifier (nicely warm). See Gideon Burton, "Silva Rhetoricae" <<http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/Figures/H/hendiadys.htm>>, and George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) 148, q.v. "Endiadis, or the Figure of Twinnes" <http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/displaypose.cfm?prosenum=17&subfile=puttenham_artofp_3.html>. In the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh typically constructs a doublet of one Arabic term and its Persian equivalent, resulting in a corresponding hendiadys in Shoghi Effendi's literal translation of each occurrence of twinned terms. Not knowing Persian and Arabic, Locke would not have known this.

78. Shoghi Effendi, letter written on his behalf by Ruhi Afnan to Locke, Feb. 15, 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-10, Folder 2 (Afnan, Ruhi).

79. Shoghi Effendi, postscript to letter to Locke, July 5, 1930.

80. See Locke, "Unity through Diversity," *Bahá'í World, Vol. IV* 372-74, reprinted in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 133-38; Alain Locke, "The Orientation of Hope," *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume V, April 1932-1934* (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1936; Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980) 527-28, reprinted in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 129-32; Alain Locke, "Lessons in World Crisis," *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume IX, April 1940-1944* (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1945; Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981) 745-47. The original manuscript for "Lessons in World Crisis" is in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, 164-106, Folder 22. Leonard Harris reprinted in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke* two of Locke's four *Bahá'í World* essays. All of Locke's Bahá'í essays, speeches, and other Bahá'í-related material will be published in Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Race and Religion* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2006, forthcoming).

81. "Baha'í Faith, Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate," *Ebony* 7 (Oct. 12, 1952): 39-46. Locke's photograph appears on page 39.

82. Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music*, Bronze Booklet No. 2 (Washington: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), and Alain Locke, *The Negro Art: Past and Present*, Bronze Booklet No. 3 (Washington: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936).

83. Alain Locke, ed., *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art* (Washington, D.C.: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1940; New York: Hacker Art Books, 1971).

84. Alain Locke and Bernhard J. Stern, ed., *When Peoples Meet: A Study of Race and Culture Contacts* (New York: Committee on Workshops, Progressive Education Association, 1942).

85. In the special issue, see Locke's lead article: Alain Locke, "The Unfinished Business of Democracy," *Survey Graphic* 31 (Nov. 1942): 455-61.

86. Alain Locke, *Le rôle du nègre dans la culture Américaine* (Port-au-Prince: Haiti Imprimerie de l'état, 1943). In Alain Locke, "The Negro in the Three Americas," *Journal of Negro Education* 14 (Winter 1944): 7-18, Locke published a brief English version based on his Haiti lectures.

87. Margaret Just Butcher, *The Negro in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1956).

88. Beth J. Singer, "Alain Locke Remembered," in *Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke* 329.

89. See Barbara Dianne Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938–1948* (Chapel Hill, NC, USA: U of North Carolina P, 1999) 36–45.

90. The anniversary program included a concert series and an exhibit of books, manuscripts, music, paintings, and other works of art. The official brochure for the event was entitled *An Exhibit of Books, Manuscripts, Music, Paintings, and Other Works of Art Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, December 18, 1940*.

91. The full text of Locke's lecture was transcribed and published by Jeffrey C. Stewart under the title "Spirituals" in *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture*, ed. Jeffrey C. Stewart (New York: Garland, 1983) 123–26.

92. See Alain Locke, "Negro Spirituals," *Freedom: A Concert in Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States*, Compactdisc (New York: Bridge, 2002), Audio (1:14). The complete audio version of the December 20, 1940, concert has been transferred to digital audio cassette (catalogued as RVA 0118-0119).

93. Alain Locke, Mordecai W. Johnson, Doxey Alphonso Wilkerson, Leon A. Ransom, "Is There a Basis for Spiritual Unity in the World Today?" *Town Meeting: Bulletin of America's Town Meeting on the Air* 8.5 (June 1, 1942): 3–12.

94. Locke, "Is There a Basis for Spiritual Unity in the World Today?" *Town Meeting* 8.5 (June 1, 1942): 7.

95. Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow* 312–33; Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," *Science, Philosophy and Religion* 196–212; Alain Locke, "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," *Approaches to World Peace* [Fourth Symposium Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion], ed. Lyman Bryson, Louis Finfelstein, and R. M. MacIver (New York: Harper, 1944) 609–18; and Alain Locke, "Pluralism and Ideological Peace," *Freedom and Experience: Essays presented to Horace M. Kallen*, ed. Milton R. Konvitz and Sidney Hook (Ithaca: New School for Research and Cornell UP, 1947) 63–69. The four essays are reprinted in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 31–50, 51–66, 69–78, and 96–102.

96. Alain Locke, letter to Shoghi Effendi, Aug. 1, 1934, in Research Department, Bahá'í World Center, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, Dec. 26, 2001.

97. Locke, "Unity through Diversity" 374, reprinted in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 133–38.

98. Alain Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," *Science, Philosophy and Religion* [Second Symposium Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion] (New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, 1942) 196–212, reprinted in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 62.

99. Alain Locke, "The Gospel for the Twentieth Century" [untitled essay], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion).

100. Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Locke, "Gospel for the Twentieth Century." See also Edward Granville Browne, Sir Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic, Cambridge University, interview with Bahá'u'lláh, Acre, Palestine, April 15, 1890, in 'Abdu'-Bahá, *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*, ed. and trans. Edward Granville Browne, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1891) xxxix–xl, reprinted in J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era: An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith*, 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, 1998 printing) 39–40.

101. Alain Locke, "The Moral Imperatives for World Order" (Summary of Proceedings, Institute of International Relations, Mills College, Oakland, CA, June 18–28, 1944, 19–20), presented on Wednesday, June 21, 1944, evening), in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 143, 151–52.

102. [Untitled], "Alain Locke, June 5, 1953," Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements) 1.

103. Leonard Harris, "Chronology: Alain Locke, 1885–1954," in *Philosophy of Alain Locke* 300. Locke instructed that his remains be cremated. See Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 6 (Will and instructions in case of death); and Folder 7 (Last will and testament, 1943). Along with many other Bahá'ís at that time, Locke was probably unaware of the Bahá'í proscription against cremation.

104. *Bahá'í News* 282 (1954): 11.

105. Benjamin Karpman, in William Stanley Braithwaite, Ralph Bunche, C. Glenn Carrington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Benjamin Karpman, Yervant Krikorian, William Stuart Nelson, *Alain LeRoy Locke Funeral Orations Brochure, 1952–1954*, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Black History and Literature Collection (University Park, PA: University Libraries, Pennsylvania State U, 1954).

106. Locke, quoted in “Says Art Raises Status of Negroes: Dr. Alain Locke Declares Nation is Re-evaluating Race for Its Contributions,” “Special to the *New York Times*,” *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1931 (available in *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times* [1851–2001] 17). Locke, who was in Germany at the time, sent to the *New York Times* the text of his paper entitled “The Negro in Art,” which had been read in absentia on September 7, 1931, at the Conference of International Student Service, held at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. The *New York Times* excerpted the paper in its article.

107. Kallen, letter to Jessie Fauset, undated, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 1, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Box 19, Folder 2 (Locke, Alain, 1946–1959). My thanks to Ms. Elise Nienaber for kindly providing me with a copy of this letter.

108. Alain Locke, “America’s Part in World Peace,” in Harlan Ober, “The Baha’i Congress at Green Acre,” *The Bahá’i Magazine (Star of the West)* 16.5 (Aug. 1925): 525.

109. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-167, Folder 4, 1950–1953 (Programs on which Locke’s Name Appears). See Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘But a Local Phase of a World Problem’: Black History’s Global Vision, 1883–1950,” *Journal of American History* 86.3 (Dec. 1999): 1045–77.



ALAIN LOCKE

as captured in archival film footage in *Negro Notables: Negro Education and Art in the U.S.*, 1937, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. The footage was used in *Against the Odds: The Artists of the Harlem Renaissance*, a sixty-minute PBS Video aired in 1993.

The Moon Maiden

White and lovely, still and wan,
She huddled and brooded as a swan.
A love-sick swan that hath her pool forsaken
For love of the moon, sore overtaken
With grief and madness for her chosen one.

A broken lyre with its broken strings
Lay there beside her, yet surely no one sings
Whose eyes are red with weeping, cheeks aflame
With the conquering glow of lofty shame
That hopeless love and longing brings.

Yet though she grieved, she was so fair
With her blossoming cheeks and moonlit hair,
That had she fallen from the moon
She could not seem a greater, sweeter boon
Than she presented to me—standing there.

She glowed and looked afar, and then she smiled,—
Helpless, enraptured like an awestruck child
I sank before her. Did I swoon?
I only know that very, very soon
I was myself no longer, thus beguiled.

She beckoned. I followed at her will
To a place all gold and white, but deathly still
I had never seen the like before
A crystal palace with a magic door
With golden hinges and a silver sill.

Again I must have swooned, and from my side
The maiden must have fled, for someone cried,
He awakens, and I did awake.
Quick fevered and thirsting for her beauty's sake,
So sad it was to waken, I had rather died.

—ALAIN LOCKE

ALAIN LOCKE, better known as the first African-American Rhodes Scholar, the “Dean” of the Harlem Renaissance, and a Bahá’í race-amity leader, was also a poet. “The Moon Maiden,” which has never been published, is here transcribed (with editorial discretion in establishing the text) from Locke’s handwritten manuscript. It is, according to *World Order’s* poetry editor, “a fine early twentieth-century poem,” “very graceful” and stemming “from a time when poetry was very formal.” The poem is reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers/Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Alain Locke in His Own Words: Three Essays

Reading about the extraordinary life of Alain Locke provides one kind of introduction to an important twentieth-century philosopher, a race-unity leader, and the father of the Harlem Renaissance. Reading Locke's own words provides another glimpse into his extraordinary mind. We have selected three previously unpublished talks to share facets of Locke's thinking. In transcribing the essays from typewritten copies, we have preserved Locke's spelling and punctuation, adding punctuation in brackets only when the text becomes hard to read. We have also deleted the hyphens Locke used in conjunction with commas to indicate pauses; capitalized (with brackets) a number of proper nouns; and used house style to make quotation marks consistent.

—THE EDITORS

ALAIN LOCKE: THE GOSPEL FOR THE TWENTIETH CENTURY¹

"The Gospel for the Twentieth Century" (an untitled essay) dispels any doubts about the depth of Alain Locke's convictions as a Bahá'í. In the opening sentence Locke defines the "gospel for the Twentieth Century" as the Bahá'í spiritual and practical principles needed to realize the unity of humankind. The Bahá'í content, for the most part, is indirect, showing the intuitive depth of Locke's understanding of the Bahá'í scriptures and his ability to correlate them with his philosophical training. It is possible that Locke developed his concept of spiritual democracy, one of a number of iterations of democracy that he explores in his published and unpublished works, from the Bahá'í scriptures.

*Archival files give no hints about why Locke wrote the article. Three pieces of internal evidence suggest that it may tentatively be dated between 1923 and 1925. Locke refers to the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Maria Holzappel, whose book *Panideal* appeared in 1923, and he quotes a passage from Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, included in John E. Esslemont's Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, also published in 1923. Less conclusive is a reference to "the New Negro." Locke used the phrase as the title of his celebrated anthology *The New Negro*, published in November 1925. However, in 1900 Booker T. Washington and three colleagues also used the phrase in the title of their book *A New Negro for a New Century*.*

The essay showcases the clarity and lucidity of Locke's prose in general.

—CHRISTOPHER BUCK

The gospel for the Twentieth Century rises out of the heart of its greatest problems [*sic*], and few who are spiritually enlightened doubt the nature of that problem. The

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1. Reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers/Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.—hereafter MSRC. See Alain Locke, "The Gospel for the Twentieth Century" [untitled essay], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion). Christopher Buck, a biographer of Locke, found the essay in August 2001.—Ed.

clashing ominous [n?]est of issues of the practical world of today, the issues of race, sect, class and nationality, all have one basic spiritual origin, and for that reason, we hope and believe one basic cure. Too long have we tried to patch these issues up and balm them over; [*sic*] instead of going to the heart and seat of the trouble in the limited and limiting conceptions of humanity which are alone, like a poisonous virus circulating through our whole social system, responsible for them. A change of condition will not remedy or more than temporarily ameliorate our chronic social antagonisms; only a widespread almost universal change of social heart, a new spirit of human attitudes, can achieve the social redemption that must eventually come. The finest and most practical idea of Christianity, the idea of the millenium [*sic*], of peace on earth, has been allowed to lapse as an illusion of the primitive Christian mind, as a mystic's mirage of another world. And as a consequence the Brotherhood of Man, taken as a negligible corollary of the fatherhood of God, has if anything in practical effect put the truth of its own basic proposition to doubtful uncertainty. The redemption of society, social salvation, should have been sought after first, the pragmatic test and proof of the fatherhood of God is afterall [*sic*] whether belief in it can realize the unity of mankind; and so the brotherhood of man, as it has been inspirationally expressed, the "oneness of humanity," must be in our day realized or religion die out gradually into ever-increasing materiality. The salvation we have sought after as individuals in an after-life and another sphere must be striven for as the practical peace and unity of the human family here in this [world]. In some very vital respects God will be rediscovered to our age if we succeed in discovering the common denominator of humanity and living in terms of it and valuing all things in accordance with it.

The world has not yet sounded the depths and realized the profundities of its most moving contemporary ideal, or sensed the challenge of its most popular slogan. Much has been accomplished in the name of Democracy, but Spiritual Democracy, its largest and most inner meaning, is so below our common horizons. Only a few from the elevation of some jutting human problem see it, and they too often as through a tragic rift through which it appears more the solution of their particular issue, the light for their particular valley than as the sun of a new universal day for humanity at large. America, that has in an economic and material way labored through to the most promising material elements of democracy, is spiritually very far from the realization of her own organic [i]deal. One would despair except for the knowledge from history that the solutions come out of the crater pots of the deepest and most seething problems.

The fundamental problems of current America are materiality and prejudice.

They seem to rise out of separate positions, but their common base is selfishness. They rest primarily not upon the economic and historical conditions in terms of which they are so often explained and discussed, but upon false human values, a blind ness [*sic*] of heart, an obstruction of social vision. And so we must say with the acute actualities of America's race problem and the acute potentialities of her economic problem, the land that is nearest to material democracy is furthest away from spiritual democracy, unless, as we have said, the heart of the solution is to come out of the crux of the problem.

Perhaps this is so. Practical philanthropy is welling up in rapidly increasing volume out of the heart of the capitalist system; and even before the class issues have begun perceptibly [*sic*] to ameliorate, we witness at last a favorable trend to the most crucial of all the American issues, the strained relations of the race question. New and promising efforts of race cooperation and help have sprung up within the last decade from the very section where the issues are most acute; of course the Old South still lingers both as an unfortunate social condition and state of mind. But essentially a New South is breaking through; and it is interesting to note not in terms of the old notion of help but of the new discovery of common interests, in other words in terms of cooperation. The inter-racial commissions spreading their work of common council through the better and more representative elements of the two races in the South, the new movement for the equalisation [*sic*] of public school expenditures, health and public welfare measures and activities that has significantly but only recently begun, the challenge of the great industrial migration of the Negro away from the South,² which has led to ameliorative measures to retain this economically valuable but hitherto socially mis-valued group, and the increasing self-esteem and direction of the New Negro himself which though it has, like the assertive rise of suppressed minorities the world over today, the potentialities of clash and rivalry and increasing sectarianism, holds nevertheless with the right social attitude toward it the possibilities of finer mutual respect and reciprocity; all these are hopeful signs out of a spiritually dark and threatening situation.

I have often thought that one of the great obstacles that has prevented the world from realizing unity was the notion, especially characteristic of the West, that to be one effectively we must all be alike, and that to be at peace we must all have the same interests. But the increasing breaking-up of Western society may not be the debacle of civilization which the Occidental materialistic uniformitarians have imagined it to be, but rather the preparatory step that will force us to abandon this false idea and adopt the true one, not of uniformity, but reciprocity, not of an outward union of bodies and cultures, but of social heart and feeling. Once we rid ourselves of the proprietary notion of civilization, we enter upon an era of spiritual reciprocity.

This, I take it, is from the intellectual point of view the one great new idea and ideal to be added in our day to our science and wrought into our practice of education. Segments of it come from many quarters; none more promising, to mention one significant light, it seems than the philosophy of the Austrian Holzappel, with its professed basic principle of the "Pan-Ideal", where universal values, the point of view of all mankind is to be substituted for the narrowing and hopelessly conflicting scales of value that race, class, nation and sect have made almost chronic defects in our thinking.

2. A reference to the Great Migration, which lasted from 1890 through 1970. Between the 1910s and the 1930s alone, nearly two million African Americans relocated from the U.S. South to Northern cities.—Ed.

We must begin working out the new era courageously, but it must be a revolution within the soul. How many external wars and revolutions it will make unnecessary, if it is only possible! And we must begin heroically with the great apparent irreconcilables; the East and the West, the black man and the self-arrogating Anglo-Saxon, for unless these are reconciled, the salvation of society in this world cannot be. If the world had believingly understood the full significance of Him who taught it to pray and hope “Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven” who also said “In my Father’s house are many mansions”, already we should be further toward the realization of this great millennial [*sic*] vision. The word of God is still insistent, and more emphatic as the human redemption delays and becomes more crucial, and we have what Dr. Elsemont [Esslemont] rightly calls Baha’u’llah’s “one great trumpet-call to humanity”: “That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family.[”]

ALAIN LOCKE: PEACE BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE IN THE UNITED STATES³

Alain Locke wrote “Peace between Black and White” (his title) in 1938 when the economic crisis in the U.S. South, exacerbated by the Depression, became a matter of national concern. On July 5 of that year, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in an official letter to “Members of the Conference on Economic Conditions in the South,” declared in no uncertain terms: “It is my conviction that the South presents right now, the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem—the Nation’s problem, not merely the South’s. For we have an economic unbalance in the Nation as whole, due to this very condition of the South itself.”⁴ On August 11, before the report was published, Roosevelt previewed its contents in a speech in Barnesville, Georgia. This is quite likely the speech to which Locke alludes in his essay. Archival records do not indicate why Locke wrote the article.

In the essay—an assessment of the cultural and economic racial situation in the South and suggestions for change that would benefit whites and blacks—Locke writes in a measured and calm manner about the economic horrors of the South in the 1930s,

3. Reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers, MSRC. See Alain Locke, “Peace Between Black and White in the United States” (unpublished essay), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-123: Folder 19.—Ed.

4. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, letter to Conference on Economic Conditions in the South, July 5, 1938, in National Emergency Council, *Report on Economic Conditions of the South* 1. See Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vol. 9 (New York: DaCapo, 1972) 436–38 <<http://www.brandywinesources.com/1901-1945/1938DOCReportontheSouth.htm>>. Established in the summer of 1938, the Conference on Economic Conditions in the South was a task force commissioned by President Roosevelt to study demographics, economic resources, private and public income, ownership and use of land, credit, purchasing power, labor, health, education, housing, women and children, industry, soil, water, and use of natural resources in the South.—Ed.

phrasing theoretical issues in practical ways. While little of what Locke says about the race situation in the 1930s South is original, his solutions are profound. The tone is urgent but tempered with his characteristically evenhanded analysis and with his raising the solutions to the level of principles that would promote prosperity for all.

“Peace between Black and White” ties in with Locke’s broader philosophy of democracy, which includes “economic democracy” as a critical aspect of social justice. To achieve domestic peace, economic values must be predicated on human and spiritual values.

—CHRISTOPHER BUCK

Certainly the only peace an intelligent and loyal Negro can contemplate in the situation of racial inequality and conflict in the Southern United States is a peace with justice, which in the long or short run must involve a radical revision of the status quo. It would seem that also any far-sighted patriot or liberal cosmopolitan would have complete agreement with this principle, not only from the idealistic point of view of justice and consistency with professed democratic principles, but from the pragmatic position that in no other way can the increasing demands of the aggrieved minority be settled. In the so-called Black Belt, which is about 60 percent of the Southern area, the Negro population is only a numerical minority by a small margin, and in certain specific areas is really a majority in numbers[,] though not in economic resources or political power.⁵ The one thing to be agreed upon by all schools of thought on the subject is, therefore, that a solution within the status quo is out of the question. For that status quo rests upon political disenfranchisement, economic exploitation, arbitrarily and legally defined bi-racial life in separate schools, public conveyances, churches and other institutional organizations, and a social stigma of “inferiority” to bolster the social policy of “white supremacy”.⁶ To observers not familiar with the situation in detail[,] it might be graphically described as an internal colonial status, an ingrowing imperialism based on color caste.

What then can we mean by talking of peace, if we go beyond mere pious aspirations and unrealistic hopes? I think the first realization of any practical importance is the reckoning, unusual in the framework of traditional race prejudice, that the white man and his civilization suffer greatly from the repression of the black minority. If, as is coming to be increasingly recognized, the low standard of living, the economic backwardness of the South and the retardation of progressive social progress in this region are direct results and general consequences of Southern social, economic and political policies based largely on the racial situation, the motives and

5. The “Reconstruction” states in the U.S. South’s Black Belt include Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.—Ed.

6. Locke is referring to late nineteenth-century statutes (known as Jim-Crow laws, named after a pre-Civil War minstrel-show character) passed by U.S. Southern (and other) states that created an American apartheid. In 1896 the Supreme Court promulgated the “separate but equal doctrine” in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, leading to a profusion of such laws. By 1914 every Southern state had established two separate societies—one white, one “colored.”—Ed.

the reasons for social reconstruction become the common interest and involve the common welfare of white and black alike.⁷ Against the partisan traditions of generations, this realization is rapidly coming to the fore in the progressive thinking of the South. It is still a minority opinion, but it holds no doubt the one hope for the future that might possibly avert race conflict of serious proportions in the next generation or half-generation. When President Roosevelt characterized the South, as he recently did, as the “Nation’s No. 1 economic problem”, he was proposing in a statesmanlike way a common denominator for social reconstruction. The earlier “Reconstruction” [—] as it was called after the emancipation of the slaves [—] brought neither real social reform nor social peace. It was pivoted on racial factionalism, national sectionalism[,] with hatreds and prejudices between the North and the South which had been the alignment of the Civil War, and the reconciliation of these factors since 1900 over the new industrialization of the South was entirely at the expense of the Negro’s interests and the political and economic rights of both the Negroes and the poor whites. They eventually found themselves jointly involved in a wage slavery as unskilled mill and factory labor or an agrarian serfdom as tenant farmers or sharecroppers.

The contemporary sharecropper’s [*sic*] revolt in the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union, and the trends toward labor organization of the semi-skilled and uns[k]illed workers, who include many Negroes, and the potentialities of political realignment breaking the old-line Democratic closed primary, which was the chief mechanism of Negro disenfranchisement[,] all point to issues of crucial and perhaps revolutionary reform.⁸ But as involving a new division between progressives and conservatives rather than on purely race lines[,] they forecast a lessening of the tension along purely racial lines and the possible averting of mass race conflict. Struggle there will be in either case, but if the common interests of the common man, black and white, become the pivot of reform effort, a progressive rather than a revolutionary movement can be anticipated. In many instances, notably in the organization of black and white workers together especially in the farmer-tenant unions, this solvent of common interest has proved effective to overcome the traditional prejudice of race.

In another country an analysis of this sort would really mean just a forecast of class war taking the place of race war, but in America economic reconstruction is already far enough along and has sufficient mass momentum to warrant our thinking of its extension without the necessity of revolution. If the cause of the Negro masses can be hitched to this forward social movement[,] there is hope. The younger Negro

7. Called by W. E. B. Du Bois, an African-American sociologist and civil-rights leader, “a glorious failure,” Reconstruction (1865–77) granted civil rights and equalities to Southern blacks. But these were systematically eroded by the courts, Southern white resistance, corrupt Northern “carpetbaggers,” and Southern “scalawag” Reconstructionist administrators. Equal rights would not be restored until the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s—sometimes called the “Second Reconstruction”—nearly a century later.—Ed.

8. Formed in the cotton-growing areas of Arkansas in July 1934 under socialist leadership, the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union was a biracial indigenous protest movement that advocated “land for the landless” and other reforms.—Ed.

leadership, aware of this, is striving to harness a rising race consciousness and growing solidarity of the Negro group to such an alignment rather than the normally separatist trends of “self-determination” and a policy of political and economic separatism. The barriers of prejudice cause many eddies of purely racialist feeling, but the larger vision of the more intelligent sections of Negro opinion is for common action and progressivism[,] particularly on the political and economic fronts. Culturally the major trends are still racialist and probably will remain so in this relatively non-controversial field.

The contemporary Western world is today one of unpredictable potentialities. Certainly the tendencies of minority causes generally does [*sic*] not favor a prediction of a peaceful solution of the American race problem. But the complete acculturation of the Negro in American life and his lack of political ambitions beyond common citizenship rights in the traditional framework of the American democracy do argue for the possibility[,] at least with proper social and economic reform[,] of that peace with justice of which we spoke. One thing is certain, under the structure of American life[,] no large-scale improvement of the economic lot of the common man is possible without proportional inclusion of the mass Negro. A wide differential of living standards or of wage standards, even as wide as the present discrepancies, will thwart the general progress and jeopardize basic reforms now under way, like state responsibility for unemployment, social security[,] child labor reforms, wide-scale unionization of labor, public supervision of health and the like, to which the public policy in America is already seriously committed. We used to say that Christianity and democracy were both at stake in the equitable solution of the race question. They were; but they were abstract ideals that did not bleed when injured. Now we think with more realistic logic, perhaps, that economic justice cannot stand on one foot; and economic reconstruction is the dominant demand of the present-day American scene.

ALAIN LOCKE: FIVE PHASES OF DEMOCRACY: FAREWELL ADDRESS AT TALLADEGA COLLEGE⁹

“Five Phases of Democracy” was Locke’s untitled farewell address to the students at Talladega College, a historically African-American college in Talladega, Alabama, where in 1941 he spent the spring term as a visiting scholar and lecturer. The talk, considering its audience, is informal, but it is important for its classification of some of the stages of democracy in which Locke was interested. In “The Gospel for the Twentieth Century” he discusses spiritual democracy, and in “Peace between Black and White in the United States,” economic democracy. In his Talladega address he covers local, moral, political, economic, and cultural democracy, which he expands in other works to include, among others, social and world democracy.

—CHRISTOPHER BUCK

9. Reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers, MSRC. See Alain Locke, “Five Phases of Democracy”: Farewell Address: Talladega College (1941), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-113, Folder 4.—Ed.

Students of Talladega:

I am loathe to leave Talladega but I must, and before I go I must thank you for a very stimulating time. I have learned some things and I hope you have.

And now, I should like to talk about something that we all take for granted—these are things we know least about. The words most frequently used are words understood least—Democracy is one of those words. Thinking Negroes, of course, know much about what democracy is not, and have a more workable conception of what democracy truly means than those who have just enough to be content with or those to whom it is just a commonplace concept and way of life. Democracy, of course, is one of the basic human ideals, but as an ideal of human association it is something quite superior to any outward institution or any particular society; therefore, not only is government too narrow to express democracy, but government from time to time must grow to realize democracy.

It may be a little daring in the time we have at our disposal, but let us put on seven-league boots and trace democracy—one of the great social concepts. Both in concept and practice democracy began in Greece—in the Greek city[-]state. In its day it was a great achievement, but in that day democracy was a concept of local citizenship. Our nearest approach to it is the kind of fellowship we find in college fraternities and sororities in which the bonds are of “like-mindedness” excluding others. The rim of the Greek concept of democracy was the barbarian: it was then merely the principle of fraternity within a narrow, limited circle. There was a dignity accorded to each member on the basis of membership in the group. It excluded foreigners, slaves and women. This concept carried over into the Roman empire.

Christianity was responsible for the introduction of the next great revision in the concept of democracy. We owe to Christianity one of the great basic ideals of democracy—the ideal of the moral equality of human beings. The Christian ideal of democracy was in its initial stages more democratic than it subsequently became. It always held on to the essential ideal of moral equality of man within the limits of organized Christianity—anybody else was a potential member only as he became converted. Christianity was thus a crusading ideal in bringing humanity into wider association. But the Christian church was a political institution and in making compromises often failed in bringing about real human equality.

The third great step in democracy came from [P]rotestant lands and people who evolved the ideal of political equality: (1) equality before the law, and (2) political citizenship. This political democracy pivoted on individualism, and the freedom of the individual in terms of what we know as the fundamental rights of man. It found its best expression in the historic formula of “Liberty, equality and fraternity”. In terms of this ideology our country’s government was founded. But for generations after[,] many of the fundamentals of our democracy were pious objectives, not fully expressed in practice. In the perspective of democracy’s long evolution, we must regard our country’s history as a progressive process of democratization, not yet fully achieved, but certainly progressing importantly in terms of the [T]hirteenth, [F]ourteenth and [F]ifteenth amendments, and the amendment extending the right of franchise to women. It is still imperfect.

The fourth crucial stage in the enlargement of democracy began, I think, with

the income tax amendment. Woodrow Wilson tried to put into operation an extension of democracy which may well have been seriously hindered by World War number one. The income tax amendment was an initial step in social democracy as distinguished from the purely political,—a step toward economic equality through the partial expropriation of surplus wealth for the benefit of the commonwealth.¹⁰ In this country for many generations we thought we had economic equality. What we really had was a frontier expansion which developed such surpluses and offered such practical equality of opportunity as to give us the illusion of economic equality. We later learned that we did not have economic democracy, and that in order to have this, we must have guaranteed to all citizens certain minimal standards of living and the right to earn a living. Faced with the crisis of unemployment, the New Deal has been confronted with the problem of inaugurating some of these beginnings of economic democracy and of constitutionally implementing a larger measure of social justice. The whole program of what is now called [S]ocial [S]ecurity is directed toward such objectives.

A fifth phase of democracy, even if the preceding four are realized, still remains to be achieved in order to have a fully balanced society. The present crisis forces us to realize that without this also democracy may go into total eclipse. This fifth phase is the struggle for cultural democracy, and rests on the concept of the right of difference,—that is, the guarantee of the rights of minorities. Again in colonial days, we achieved the basic ideals of this crucial aspect of democracy, but scarcely realized them in fact. Today we have the same problems of the freedom of speech, worship and conscience, but in a complex modern situation these things are even more difficult to work out. One of our greatest problems then today is a real democratic reciprocity for minorities of all sorts, both as over against the so-called majority and among themselves. These contemporary problems of democracy can be vividly sensed if we realize that the race question is at the very heart of this struggle for cultural democracy. Its solution lies beyond even the realization of political and economic democracy, although of course that solution can only be reached when we no longer have extreme political inequality and extreme economic inequality. Yet there still remains this difference. For example, the fact that a man cannot afford to buy a decent house for his family involves the problem of economic inequality; but, on the other hand, the man who through social prejudice is refused the purchase of a house though he can afford to buy it confronts us with an example of cultural inequality. So, of course, prejudice as well as economic barriers are obstacles still in the way of true democratic living. If we look at it in this way we will get something of a perspective that may give some understanding of what has to be done today

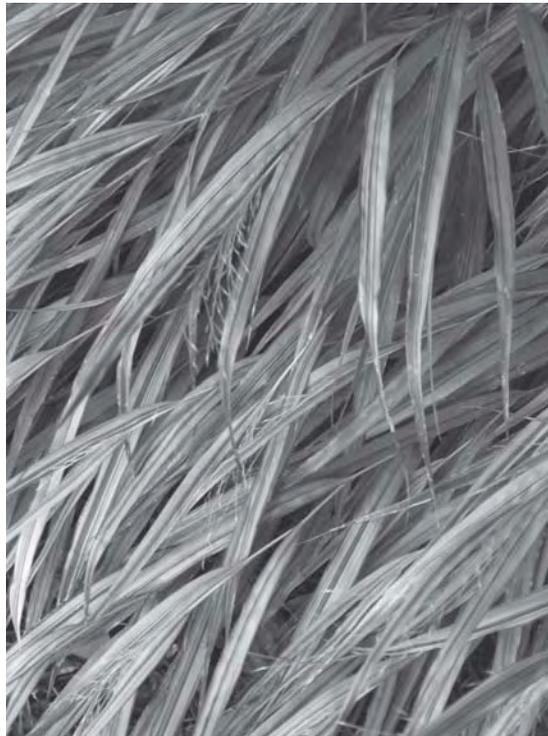
ONE OF OUR GREATEST PROBLEMS TODAY
IS A REAL DEMOCRATIC RECIPROCITY
FOR MINORITIES OF ALL SORTS,
BOTH AS OVER AGAINST THE
SO-CALLED MAJORITY
AND AMONG THEMSELVES.

10. In 1913 the Sixteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave Congress the power to levy and collect federal income taxes.—Ed.

and the task which lies before our country. We should not be so satisfied with what little democracy we have that we neglect to enlarge it. Nor is democracy in practice automatic when its legal basis is established. The vote to women, for example, has not yet raised the standard in the use of the franchise, for women are not yet used to voting and bringing pressure to bear.¹¹ A machinery of enlarged participation is the only way in which that democracy can be set up.

In closing I might say that the two problems of democracy today center first in the crusade for economic justice—economic equality of opportunity, and, second, in the equally important crusade for cultural democracy or mutual respect for our various group differences and a working reciprocity among our various minorities. Both need to be incorporated in a just and tolerant cosmopolitan way of living together; and that for our time is the crux of this age-old but ever-enlarging struggle for and toward a truly democratic way of life.

11. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote.—Ed.



"Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Bah'á'í Pluralist". *World Order* 36.3 (2005): 7-36.[27]. Buck, Christopher. Zoeller, Jack. "Alain Locke at Oxford: Race and the Rhodes Scholarships," *The American Oxonian*, Vol. XCIV, No. 2 (Spring 2007).[10]. *Africa Within*[37].