



The Nuggets

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Baha'i Stories

Animals

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá said]: "Strange indeed that after 20 years of training in colleges and universities man should reach such a station wherein he will deny the existence of the ideal or that which is not perceptible to the senses. Have you ever stopped to think that the animal already has graduated from such a university? Have you ever realized that the cow is already a professor emeritus of that university? For the cow without hard labor and study is already a philosopher of the superlative degree in the school of nature. The cow denies everything that is not tangible, saying, "I can see! I can eat!"

Therefore, I believe only in what is tangible!" Then why should we go to the colleges? Let us go to the cow. ~Earl Redman, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst

Events and News

Luxembourg: Overcoming passivity through community-building



ESCH-BELVAL, Luxembourg — *Over the last three years, an expanding conversation in Luxembourg has been exploring the role of the community in overcoming the challenges of passivity and social fragmentation by examining their root causes. Facilitated by the Bahá'ís of that country, this initiative bridges theory and practice by bringing together academics and members of civil society in forums held at the University of Luxembourg to advance thought about fostering a more cohesive society.*

Jean-Pierre Schmit of Luxembourg's Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs explains that these discussions draw on insights from Bahá'í community-building efforts that encourage participants to look beyond their immediate circles and actively contribute to the well-being of their wider communities.

“Overcoming lethargy and fostering agency are no simple tasks,” says Mr. Schmit, adding that “the challenges of passivity are pervasive in modern society, where a desire to be entertained is nurtured from childhood by different social forces.”

Despite this challenge, Mr. Schmit, in a conversation with the News Service, noted that Bahá'í community-building endeavors offer valuable insights. These educational and service efforts create environments where participants see themselves on a collective journey to contribute to social betterment through practical actions in their neighborhoods.

“In this process, neighbors learn to consult together about specific needs, such as the moral education of their children,” he said. As participants address these needs, they come to better understand each other, seeing more in common than differences, and a profound sense of humanity's essential oneness begins to flourish.

The series of annual workshops and fortnightly reading groups exploring these themes with academics and civil society actors over the past three years are part of the Bahá'í community's contribution to the discourse on social cohesion. These workshops—co-hosted by Professor Robert Harmsen, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences—have been held at the University of Luxembourg.

Throughout the workshops, a key observation has been how the pandemic has impacted social dynamics. On one hand, the pandemic heightened a sense of care and community as people rallied to support one another. On the other hand, as Professor Harmsen has emphasized throughout the series of workshops, the pandemic also exacerbated existing social divisions and inequalities.

This dual impact has been a central theme in the discussions, highlighting both the potential for increased social cohesion and the challenges that need to be addressed. Mr. Schmit explained that while the health crisis has revealed deeper inequalities, communities fostering the capacity to serve one another are learning to overcome an ‘us-versus-them’ mindset. This shift, he said, nurtures outward-oriented communities that are inclusive and welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds, including those who have newly arrived in Luxembourg.

Lisa McLean, managing director of the community-based Radio Ara and one of the long-standing participants, emphasized the importance of the workshops and reading groups, saying, “They provided a space to reflect with like-minded individuals, helping us understand our experiences in a broader context.”

Mr. Schmit explains that upcoming workshops will continue to explore characteristics of vibrant communities that promote a sense of shared identity as members of one human family.

News from the Twin Community of Jaipur

Here is a sample of activities in pictures of many junior youth groups, Ruhi study groups, children’s classes, home visits and devotional and prayer meetings in different parts of Jaipur and Rajasthan.



Food for the Mind, Heart and Soul

Metal detectorist returns woman’s late mother’s wedding rings

A U.K. metal detectorist has worked a near-miracle, reuniting a woman with a beloved chain that held her late mother's promise, engagement and wedding rings.

The 24-year-old was "devastated" when her necklace chain broke while she was swimming at Les Amarreurs beach in Guernsey last month.

On the chain hung three of her mom's rings which always made her "feel close" to her late parent.

Not giving up hope, Tessa Le Gallez telephoned a local metal detectorist Matthew Kneebone and asked if he could possibly help her get the heirlooms back.

"My mum passed away in April and it was her wish that I had her rings," recalls the office manager.

"I put it on a strong chain around my neck because sometimes in the cold your fingers shrink and you can lose your rings.

"I went swimming and by complete freak accident, my dog jumped on me and his claw got caught in the chain. It took all of his weight and snapped.

She searched for hours but couldn't find them.

"I was panicking and worried I would never see them again. They're so precious to me. That's when I called Matthew and asked for help."

Mr. Kneebone, a stonemason on the rocky island in the English Channel, told her he would be able to find the lost rings when there was a spring tide again.

Sure enough, two weeks later, on September 1, Matthew and Tessa headed back down to the beach—and within ten minutes, Matthew had found the chain. Then, amazingly, within a half hour, all of three of heirlooms were uncovered.

Tessa Le Gallez with metal detectorist Matthew Kneebone – SWNS

Tessa was elated. "It was such a relief. Those rings mean the world to me and they're incredibly sentimental."

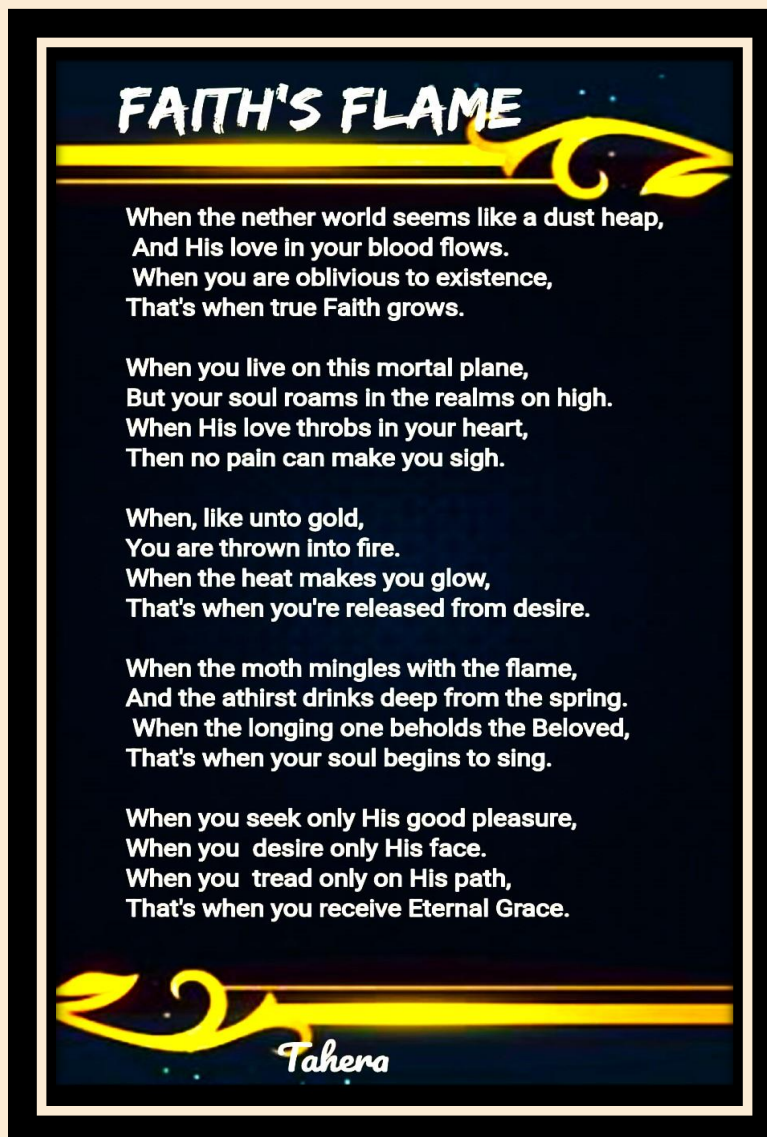
The 50-year-old who has been metal detecting since he was 14, said: “Tessa was very grateful and so emotional. She ran up to me and gave me a big hug.

“I’ll never be able to thank him enough and I’ll always be grateful. He’s the most selfless man I’ve ever met in my life and people like him make the world a better place.”

The benefits go both ways, says Matthew. “It’s a really good feeling when you manage to find something for someone.”

Poems

By Tahera Yadev:



Social Action

Mona's story lives on in Texas



Even after 40 years, the story of the faith and sacrifice of Mona Mahmoudnejad, a 17-year-old executed in Iran for refusing to recant her Baha'i Faith, moves people to tears. A recent North Texas-based touring production of Mark Perry's one-act play, "A New Dress for Mona" brought Mona's heroic tale to combined audiences of more than a thousand.

What started out as a college senior capstone project for Anisa Hosseini, a theater student at the University of Texas in Dallas, seemed to grow wings of its own. For her directorial debut and graduation requirement, Hosseini wanted to present something meaningful and combine her love of theater and education with her Baha'i identity. She pitched the idea of staging "A New Dress for Mona."

Only later did she realize the production perfectly coincided with the #OurStoryIsOne Campaign, sponsored by the Baha'i International Community to promote artistic expressions that would mark the 40th anniversary of the martyrdom of ten Baha'i women in Shiraz in 1984.

Hosseini convinced some of her Baha'i friends to take roles and then held open auditions. Out of an original cast of 12, three parts, that of Mona, Mona's mother, and Mona's friend, Farah, went to actors who were previously unfamiliar with the story. Things moved quickly, with time enough for only one week of rehearsals.

The play drew 200 people to each of its two stagings at the Plano Baha'i Center. The performances evoked emotional memories for audience members who personally knew Mona or one of her sister-

martyrs. “The play took me to 40 years ago and brought back to life the memories of those historical and spiritual moments,” says Soosan Sabet, a Baha’i from Dallas.

Throughout, the moving portrayals elicited audible gasps from the crowds.

“I had goosebumps all over my body during the act, and even my mother, who doesn’t understand English, was moved to tears by the wonderful performance,” says Makan Kamel, from Plano.

The performances were met with tears and standing ovations.

One Baha’i says she was so affected by the performance that she wasn’t able to watch the whole thing. “It made me feel I am going through those dark times all over again,” says Shiva Shaba of Houston, who says she couldn’t believe that the actors could elicit such grief. “These youth are coming from another generation and grew up in a culturally different environment.”

Audience members were surprised when they found out Gayathri Kosigi, who played Mona so convincingly, was neither Persian, nor a Baha’i. One woman from Plano who had known Mona in Shiraz hugged Kosigi for a very long time after her performance. “That is the first time I’ve ever experienced that someone knew the person I was portraying,” Kosigi says, “I’ve never felt so welcomed and appreciated during a show.”

The actress who played Mona’s mother, Megan Lemonds, seemed to capture her essence and anguish in a way recognizable to those who knew her in real life. Lemonds says that this role was her favorite of all the plays she has done, because the audience response was so unique. Persian men with tears streaming down their cheeks thanking the actors for telling this story was something they would not soon forget.

A young Muslim woman in the cast, Wania “Nia” Sheikh, played Farrah, Mona’s friend. “The Mona play came into my life unexpectedly and left a bigger mark than I would have expected it to,” says Sheikh. “It has changed me as a person. It was a sort of spiritual awakening, a journey that I ended up taking that led me closer to myself and my own religion. I will continue to share Mona’s story wherever I go and whenever I get the chance to.”

The show was expected to run for only the two performances, but the cast and crew were invited to tour at the Baha’i Center in Houston, then later in Austin. In order to encourage as many people as possible to attend, admission was free. The production received generous donations from individuals as well as the financial support of the local Baha’i communities.

The final performance in Coppell, a suburb in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, attracted more than 500 people. Many Baha’is brought friends and associates to see the play, which became a tool for discussion about human rights and about religious persecution.

Ellen and Scott Hakala, Baha’is from Highland Village, Texas, brought ten friends to the play and hosted a fireside dinner afterwards. “Our friends were deeply moved,” Ellen says. “Most are highly educated and they were surprised they didn’t know about the situation in Iran.”

After one performance in Houston, an audience member who was not a Baha'i, stood up and pleaded for everyone to contact their congressmen to end the persecutions as he had witnessed the suffering of his friends.

Yash Pathi, who volunteered his time to assist his friends in the crew, did not previously know about Mona's story. "Mona's courage resonated deeply with me," Pathi says. "It created a moment of reflection, urging me to contemplate the liberties we frequently overlook and take for granted as citizens of the United States."

Hosseini had to quickly adapt her artistic vision to prepare each subsequent venue: welcoming new actors, adjusting the blocking and including new songs. She says the additions made the play stronger each time.

The modifications "deepened the message," says Snigdha Kola, who has been coming to Bahá'í activities over several years and saw the play twice. She says the actor's portrayals were "deep beyond words, leaving an impact that I will carry with me for a long time."

A friend of Mona's mother heard about the traveling theater production. She gave Hosseini a green leather purse that had belonged to Mona to use as a prop. In this way, a small piece of the young martyr traveled with the troupe.

Hami Eghrari, assistant director, says that Mona "was killed in secret and buried in the silence of the night—but decades later we're still telling her story loud and clear, in a whole different continent. If that's not powerful, then I don't know what is."

From the Pages of History

Afflictions which befell Quddus and Mulla Sadiq

Husayn Khan ordered the arrest of both Quddus and Mulla Sadiq. The police authorities, to whom they were delivered, were instructed to bring them handcuffed into the presence of the governor. The police also delivered into the hands of Husayn Khan the copy of the Qayyumu'l-Asma', which they had seized from Mulla Sadiq while he was reading aloud its passages to an excited congregation. Quddus, owing to his youthful appearance and unconventional dress, was at first ignored by Husayn Khan, who preferred to direct his remarks to his more dignified and elderly companion. "Tell me," angrily asked the governor, as he turned to Mulla Sadiq, "if you are aware of the opening passage of the Qayyumu'l-Asma' wherein the Siyyid-i-Bab addresses the rulers and kings of the Earth in these terms: 'Divest yourselves of the robe of sovereignty, for He who is the King in truth, hath been made manifest! The Kingdom is God's, the Most Exalted. Thus hath the Pen of the Most High decreed!' If this be true, it must necessarily apply to my sovereign, Muhammad Shah, of the Qajar dynasty, ⁽¹⁾ whom I represent as the chief magistrate of this province. Must Muhammad Shah, according to this behest, lay down his crown and abandon his sovereignty? Must I, too, abdicate my power and relinquish my position?" Mulla Sadiq unhesitatingly replied: "When once the truth of the Revelation announced by the Author of these words shall have been definitely established, the truth of whatsoever has fallen from His lips will likewise be

vindicated. If these words be the Word of God, the abdication of Muhammad Shah and his like can matter but little. It can in no wise turn aside the Divine purpose, nor alter the sovereignty of the almighty and eternal King."

That cruel and impious ruler was sorely displeased with such an answer. He reviled and cursed him, ordered his attendants to strip him of his garments and to scourge him with a thousand lashes. He then commanded that the beards of both Quddus and Mulla Sadiq should be burned, their noses be pierced, that through this incision a cord should be passed, and with this halter they should be led through the streets of the city. "It will be an object lesson to the people of Shiraz," Husayn Khan declared, "who will know what the penalty of heresy will be." Mulla Sadiq, calm and self-possessed and with eyes upraised to heaven, was heard reciting this prayer: "O Lord, our God! We have indeed heard the voice of One that called. He called us to the Faith--`Believe ye on the Lord your God!`--and we have believed. O God, our God! Forgive us, then, our sins, and hide away from us our evil deeds, and cause us to die with the righteous."⁽¹⁾ With magnificent fortitude both resigned themselves to their fate. Those who had been instructed to inflict this savage punishment performed their task with alacrity and vigour. None intervened in behalf of these sufferers, none was inclined to plead their cause. Soon after this, they were both expelled from Shiraz. Before their expulsion, they were warned that if they ever attempted to return to this city, they would both be crucified. By their sufferings they earned the immortal distinction of having been the first to be persecuted on Persian soil for the sake of their Faith. Mulla Aliy-i-Bastami, though the first to fall a victim to the relentless hate of the enemy, underwent his persecution in Iraq, which lay beyond the confines of Persia. Nor did his sufferings, intense as they were, compare with the hideousness and the barbaric cruelty which characterised the torture inflicted upon Quddus and Mulla Sadiq.

An eye-witness of this revolting episode, an unbeliever residing in Shiraz, related to me the following: "I was present when Mulla Sadiq was being scourged. I watched his persecutors each in turn apply the lash to his bleeding shoulders, and continue the strokes until he became exhausted. No one believed that Mulla Sadiq, so advanced in age and so frail in body, could possibly survive fifty such savage strokes. We marvelled at his fortitude when we found that, although the number of the strokes of the scourge he had received had already exceeded nine hundred, his face still retained its original serenity and calm. A smile was upon his face, as he held his hand before his mouth. He seemed utterly indifferent to the blows that were being showered upon him. When he was being expelled from the city, I succeeded in approaching him, and asked him why he held his hand before his mouth. I expressed surprise at the smile upon his countenance. He emphatically replied: `The first seven strokes were severely painful; to the rest I seemed to have grown indifferent. I was wondering whether the strokes that followed were being actually applied to my own body. A feeling of joyous exultation had invaded my soul. I was trying to repress my feelings and to restrain my laughter. I can now realise how the almighty Deliverer is able, in the twinkling of an eye, to turn pain into ease, and sorrow into gladness. Immensely exalted is His power above and beyond the idle fancy of His mortal creatures.'" Mulla Sadiq, whom I met years after, confirmed every detail of this moving episode.~ **The Dawn Breakers & Nabil's Narrative**

Sharing

Douglas Wilson's sharing:

O God, guide me, protect me, make
of me a shining lamp and a brilliant
star. Thou art the Mighty and the
Powerful.



Abdu'l-Bahá

*News and Nuggets from Other Religions and
Communities*



Canada's Oldest First Nation's Newspaper

Massive sections of Clayoquot Sound's Forest soon to be protected



Vancouver Island, BC

Large portions of forest in Clayoquot Sound will be protected this month, a development that the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation is calling a “major step” in the provincial government recognizing its Tribal Parks.

Today the province announced 76,000 hectares of conservancies in Clayoquot Sound. When these protected areas come into effect on June 26, they will comprise almost 60 per cent of what is currently under a forestry tenure tied to TFL 54, the only tree farm licence in Clayoquot Sound.

The 10 new sections of protected land are within the traditional territories of the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht First Nations. These areas of Crown land contain old growth forest and habitat for endangered and threatened species.

“The survival of these precious forests will allow future generations to continue practicing our cultural ways, will stabilize the climate in this region, and will provide much needed habitat for a diversity of species,” stated the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation in a press release.

The newly protected areas align with the Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht’s land use visions, according to province. The establishment of the conservancies follow a period in which sections of Clayoquot Sound’s old growth forest have been temporarily protected under a deferral since 2020.

The tenure for TFL 54 is currently held by Ma-Mook Natural Resources, which is owned by a partnership of the Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Hesquiaht, Toquaht and Yuułuꞑilꞑaṭḥ First Nations. Payment for removing the Crown land from the tenure is being funded by Nature United, the Canadian affiliate of the world’s largest conservation organization.

The conservancies mean that commercial logging, mining and large-scale hydroelectric projects will be prohibited in the areas. Approximately 55,000 hectares of TFL 54 will remain for forestry purposes.

The tree farm licence is undergoing a reconfiguration “that supports predictable fibre flow through First Nation-held tenures in the future,” according to the province.

“These conservancies are welcomed as part of a broader vision for implementing Ahousaht title and rights, generating economic opportunity through a forest carbon project and community forestry, and securing social and cultural access to forest resources,” stated Ahousaht Hereditary Representative Tyson Atleo.

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation stated that the new protected areas are a “crucial part of our vision to remove competing tenures from our title lands and restore our customary stewardship traditions in a modern context.”

“The establishment of conservancies will ensure that clear-cut logging has no place in these important old-growth forests,” stated Tla-o-qui-aht Chief Councillor Elmer Frank in a release from the province. “This protection by British Columbia brings B.C. laws into better alignment with Tla-o-qui-aht laws.”

A vital part of the First Nation’s stewardship are its Tribal Parks, which began in 1984 with the protection of old growth on wanačas hihuuʔis (Meares Island) from being logged by MacMillan Bloedel. In 1985 a court injunction was put in place to protect the island from this activity, an order that remains in place today. Other parts of the First Nation’s territory were declared Tribal Parks in 2014.

“The same title exists on the hiisawista (Esowista) peninsula, ʔaʔukmin (Kennedy Lake watershed), and hiisyaakʔis ʔunaacul (Tranquil River watershed), and the islands of Tla-o-qui-aht haʔuuli (traditional territory),” stated the Tla-o-qui-aht.

Although more of Clayoquot Sound will be protected from being harvested, Minister of Forests Bruce Ralston said the conservancies will bring more clarity for forestry, while giving “our industry partners confidence in the future of forestry.”

“Conserving nature and creating sustainable jobs are important objectives that we can achieve to secure a stronger future for everyone,” he added.

In recent years the volume of lumber being harvested in B.C. has declined dramatically – particularly old growth. Since 2021 the province’s overall harvest has declined from 45 million cubic metres to 32.4 million last year. From 2015 to 2022 the area of old growth forest harvested has dropped by 52 per cent, declining from 66,526 hectares to approximately 33,000.

Meanwhile 2.42 million hectares have been either deferred from harvest or permanently protected since November 2021, adding to the 3.8 million hectares that were already conserved.

From the Editor’s Desk

Can We Have a Flag for Our Planet?

Lately, I’ve been wishing that we had a flag for our planet, along with our national flags. Wouldn’t having one universal banner that offers the Earth our commitment, allegiance, respect, and love be great?

Actually, the topic of flags has been occupying my mind and soul for a long time, but I have to start with a disclaimer to avoid misunderstanding or accusations of being unpatriotic: I am not against any flag or country and have nothing against loving one's motherland or fatherland. I think that kind of patriotism shows the existence of passion, gratefulness, and loyalty.

But I do have a problem when those feelings of patriotism come at the cost of forgetting our love for our bigger home, our love for the whole Earth.

This feeling is very personal. While watching the Olympics or other sports, I sometimes feel like I have divided loyalties since I have lived in Iran, India, China, Latin America, and Canada. Wherever I lived, I felt that it was my country and it was home to me.

How I wish we had a flag for the whole Earth – to show our love for it, salute it and even shed tears for its sad situation. By doing that, in reality, we show love for our individual countries, too.

How I wish we would not kill in the name of a small portion of the planet or wouldn't hate people who live on the other side of a borderline drawn, not by God, but by man.

I wish some of those tears were shed when the national anthems are played for a flag representing our entire planet. It saddens me to see so much love being misplaced. I fear these strong national sentiments block our love for the wider world and humanity. They may stop us from expanding our minds and souls to see how we need each other, no matter which side of a border we live on.

How I wish humanity had not divided our God-given planet into different pieces, which have changed throughout human history due to conflict, violence, and bloodshed.

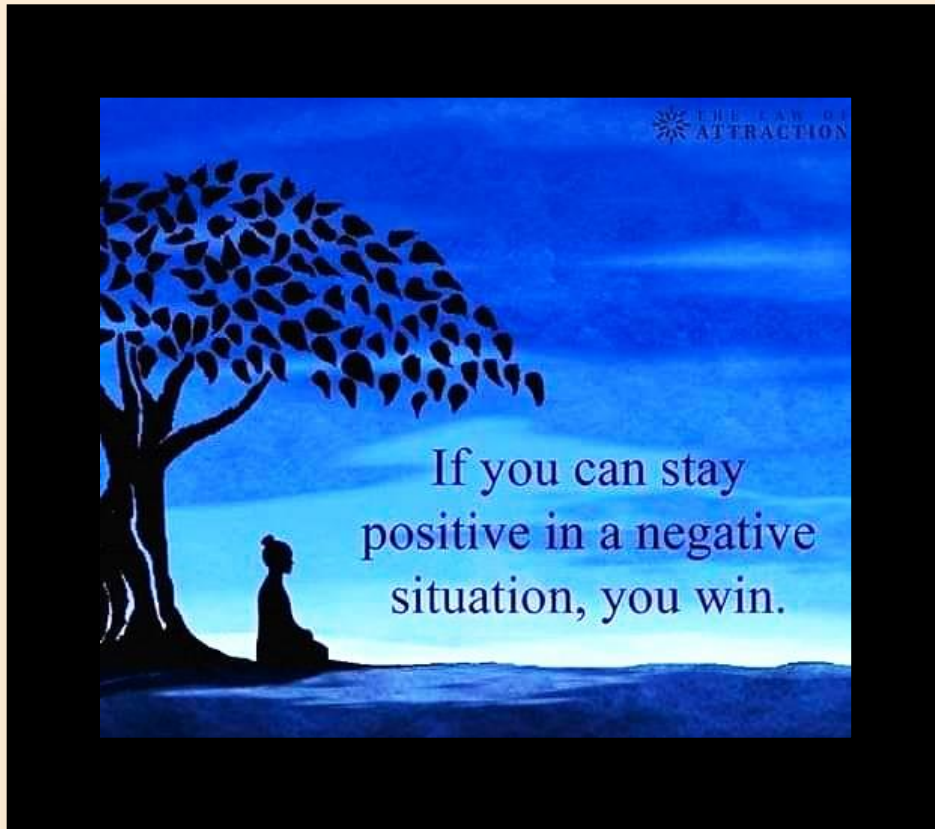
My feelings, like all Baha'is who consider humanity as one family and the whole Earth as one country, try to expand our horizons beyond our national and religious allegiances.

**“A fundamental teaching of Baha'u'llah is the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing mankind, He says, “Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.” By this it is meant that the world of humanity is like a tree, the nations or peoples are the different limbs or branches of that tree, and the individual human creatures are as the fruits and blossoms thereof.” -
Abdu'l-Baha**

There is no shame in loving our home country, but not at the cost of making that a reason to dislike or hate or make war against others from other parts of the planet.

Sadly, those ready to kill and die for their homeland ignore the needs of our real home, the Earth. Due to our narrow view of nationalism, our home is in danger of being destroyed.

Humanity has come a long way. I hope that soon, we will reach our collective maturity and accept that we are all citizens of Mother Earth. She is our true country. Then, we can direct our energies and resources to the world's unification and healing the damages our ignorance and conflict have caused.



Writings to Ponder and Practice

“O SON OF BEING! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.” ~ Bahá'u'lláh

For sharing materials and questions, write to bshams@telus.net