

ABS Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR BAHÁ'Í STUDIES—NORTH AMERICA

Janet Khan is named 2006 Balyuzi Lecturer

The Executive committee of the Association for Bahá'í Studies has named Janet A. Khan to deliver the 24th Hasan M. Balyuzi Lecture at the Association's 30th Annual Conference. The conference, on the theme, "Religion and the Evolution of Consciousness," will be held over the weekend of 10–13 August 2006 at the San Francisco Airport Marriott.

Dr. Khan, originally from Australia, holds a PhD in Counselling and Guidance from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She has served as a counsellor and program specialist at the Center for Continuing

Education of Women at the University of Michigan and as Director of the program in Counselling Psychology in the Psychology Department at the University of Queensland, Australia.

Since 1983 she has lived in Haifa, Israel, where she is a staff member of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre.

Dr. Khan is the author of *Prophet's Daughter: The Life and Legacy of Baháyyih Khánum, Outstanding Heroine of the Bahá'í Faith* (Bahá'í Publishing,

New Guidelines for Special Interest Groups

The ABS Executive Committee has developed new guidelines for Special Interest Groups (updated 14 February 2006).

Nature and Purpose of Special Interest Groups

In its 8 April 2005 letter to members, the Executive Committee of the Association for Bahá'í Studies announced efforts to further develop Special Interest Groups (SIGs), in order to increase interchange and collaboration among its members. Special Interest Groups are agencies of the Association, which itself is an agency of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada. Both the

Association and its Special Interest Groups are structured as membership organizations with appointed administrators. Both exist to "stimulate scholarly study of the Faith and its teachings, to promote a sound understanding of the Cause in academic circles and to demonstrate its relevance to the study of social issues."¹ Special Interest Groups can make a particular contribution to the Association's distinct role in developing and presenting accurate information on the Faith's teachings and history in university courses and other scholarly venues and creating respectful and encouraging environments for interchange among a diverse range of

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All aboard for the San Francisco conference! (Photo: San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau)

2005) and is the coauthor, with Peter J. Khan, of *Advancement of Women: A Bahá'í Perspective* (1998).

Conference proposals

You can still submit a proposal for a conference presentation! The deadline for submissions is **15 April**. Proposals should be submitted online at <<http://www.bahai-studies.ca/conferences.php>>.

A conference registration form is included with this Bulletin. For more information or to register by phone, contact the ABS office at 613-233-1903 or e-mail: <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>.

Visit the ABS Web site, <www.bahai-studies.ca>, for more information and updates on the conference program.

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scholars. This range includes both “scholars whose principal interest is in theological issues as well as those scholars whose interests lie in relating the insights provided by the Bahá’í teachings to contemporary thought in the arts and sciences.”²

In order to serve these purposes, and in light of the ABS Vision Statement, the specific goals of the Special Interest Group system within the Association are the following:

- 1 to promote networking among ABS members, based on their interests, fields, and professions
- 2 to mentor students and young people in their studies and early professional life
- 3 to encourage, inspire, and facilitate individual and collaborative Bahá’í scholarship, and
- 4 to support, as appropriate, members’ “outward-looking orientation” within their respective fields and professions, with particular emphasis on universities.

Special Interest Groups on a diverse array of subjects will develop at different rates, establish different patterns of activity, and organize themselves in different ways, as suited to their particular field and the interests of their members. This diversity is expected, appreciated, and valued. Efforts to develop Special Interest Groups should be founded on the principles of Bahá’í consultation and a continual process of learning through action and reflection.

Practical Matters

While the success of a SIG will depend primarily on the initiative and efforts of its coordinator and members, the ABS Executive Committee will make every effort to provide the infrastructure and the support needed,

on a timely basis, to assist in SIG development. Each member of the Committee has been asked to serve as liaison to one or more SIGs, and a SIG coordinator should feel welcome to contact the liaison or the ABS Office Manager, Parvin Rowhani, to discuss any question that may arise. The current guidelines for SIG operations are as follows:

- SIGs will use standard names only, identifying themselves as a Special Interest Group on [topic] of the Association for Bahá’í Studies.
- No fees will be charged for forming or joining a SIG but SIG members must be members of the Association for Bahá’í Studies—North America. They need not be Bahá’ís.
- SIG activities should generally be self-supporting but the Executive Committee will consider requests for small amounts of funding for a specific purpose.
- SIGs may not solicit funds or conduct fundraising activities without specific approval of the Executive Committee.
- SIGs may develop their own Web site, either as a page on the Association’s site or a separate site linked both to and from the ABS site. Some technical support for this will be available.
- Plans are underway to enable SIGs to set up listserves for e-mail discussion.
- Review of materials for publication in a SIG newsletter or on a SIG Web site is primarily the responsibility of SIG coordinators. Such materials must adhere to standards of dignity and accuracy in representing the Faith as well as the spirit of Bahá’í scholarship delineated in the guidance of the Universal House of Justice. Questions regarding the appropriateness of specific Web content should be referred to the SIG’s liaison on the Executive Committee.

2006 Annual Conference

Participation in organizing sessions at the Association’s annual conference is one important avenue by which Special Interest Groups can advance their purposes. In past years, one day was scheduled for their activities. This year, the conference will experiment with another model, familiar to those accustomed to participating in scholarly and academic conferences. Specifically, the main conference will take place on all days (Thursday morning, 10 August, through Sunday noon, 13 August) and Special Interest Group presentations will be integrated into sequences within the conference program. The transition this year to this new model for organizing the conference may be a rather bumpy ride at times, but the overall goals are to

- (a) increase the visibility and contribution of the Special Interest Groups in the whole conference
- (b) ensure that topics, especially

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The *ABS Bulletin* (ISSN 0840-6138) is published quarterly by the Association for Bahá’í Studies, a nonprofit scholarly organization with 1487 international open memberships and 118 institutional memberships. The Association promotes scholarship on all aspects of the Bahá’í Faith; holds conferences and seminars on promising research fields; develops courses, lectureships, and other formal presentations relating Bahá’í principles to scholarly research fields; and publishes books, as well as the refereed *Journal of Bahá’í Studies*.

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International Affiliates

Japan

The 14th Annual Conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies–Japan will be held on 6–8 October in Yamaguchi, Japan. The conference theme will be “Moral Education: Collaboration of Family, School, and Community.”

“Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society. . . .” (The Universal House of Justice, 2000).

All forms of presentations are welcomed: from research papers to personal stories, suggestions, panel talks and artistic expressions (music, dance, theater, calligraphy, etc.). Maxwell International Bahá'í School principal Daniel Vaillancourt will be one of the guest speakers.

Send presentation proposals or inquiries to Nozomu Sonda, e-mail: <sonda_nozomu@ybb.ne.jp>.

The conference venue is Paltopia Yamaguchi (Bocho Seinen Kaikan). Web site: <<http://www2.ocn.ne.jp/~paltopia/>>.

United Kingdom

The Association for Bahá'í Studies–UK has just been formed, replacing the ABS–English–Speaking Europe. ABS–UK is to be administered by an Executive Committee whose members are Naysun Alae–Carew, Alla Borets, Michael Gammage, Nazila Ghanea–Hercock, and Saba Hinrichs.

Its 2006 Annual Conference, on the theme “Borderless Communities,” will be held on 17–19 June 2006, at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 28 Russell Square, London WC2.

Submissions are invited for papers, presentations, and workshops address-

ing the conference theme and/or topics of relevance to ABS Special Interest Groups such as Religious Studies, Science, International Law and Politics, Education, and Gender.

Submissions in the form of an abstract (less than one page) should be sent by **30 April 2006** to the Conference Registrar, Jane O'Hara, e-mail: <janefohara@blueyonder.co.uk.>.

Bahá'í Studies Colloquy at American Academy of Religion

The next meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) will be in Washington, D.C., 18–21 November. The Bahá'í Studies Colloquy will be conducting one or two panels on the Faith at the conference, which is attended by 9,000 professors and students of religious studies.

The organizers are seeking abstracts of possible presentations, which must meet the standards of professional academic study of religion.

Length of abstracts: 100 to 200 words. Deadline: **1 May 2006** (the program must be submitted to AAR by mid month to be in the program book). For more information or to make a submission, contact Robert H. Stockman, e-mail: <rstockman@usbnc.org>; tel.: 847-337-7750.

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- overlapping topics, are identified and scheduled in the most effective manner
- (c) build into the conference planning process a method for peer review, support, and encouragement for individuals proposing presentations

- (d) thereby increase the potential and likelihood that presenters might continue to develop work presented at the conference, publishing it and/or presenting it in other venues, and
- (e) develop the feel and sense that the conference, rather than just an event, is part of an ongoing process of collaborative support for work in progress in Bahá'í scholarship.

In order to ensure as smooth a process of coordination as possible, all proposals will be submitted through one central online submission form and will be routed to Special Interest Group coordinators electronically. This will allow all of the information to be gathered into a central database so that information can then be easily sorted and shared throughout the conference organizing process. However, the role of the coordinators in generating proposals is also critical. They may issue a SIG call for proposals if they wish, approach and encourage individuals to submit proposals, work with them in developing or refining proposals, put together proposals for panels or group presentations in various formats, etc., all of which will then be submitted via the online submission form on the ABS Web site.

SIG coordinators will also then assist the program chair with the review of topical submissions and, following the review and final selection of presentations, contribute to overall scheduling to help coordinate the many crossover topics. It is understood that the many Special Interest Groups are at different stages in their development and that the number and length of conference sessions that they will be involved in planning will vary. In addition to main conference sessions, the consultative business/networking meetings of the Special

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Interest Groups can be scheduled at any time during the conference break-out sessions, instead of being restricted to the first day. The conference task force may be able to arrange for extra venues for special meetings during mealtimes, and other unscheduled hours.

Role of Special Interest Group Coordinators

The successful development of a SIG will depend on having one or more coordinators who can, at a minimum, carry out the following tasks:

- (a) set up and maintain at least a basic level of communications with and among SIG members throughout the year
- (b) organize a consultative business/networking meeting for the SIG at the annual conference and send a brief report of the meeting to the liaison
- (c) assist the program chair of the annual conference with the review of submissions, either as a

reviewer or by recommending a reviewer for the Executive Committee's approval

- (e) maintain complete confidentiality regarding membership lists, conference submission review, and communications regarding members and membership, and
- (f) ensure that the Executive Committee is kept apprised of SIG activities on a regular basis, including by forwarding to the liaison or the ABS Office any plans for SIG development.

Beyond these basic responsibilities, the opportunities for a SIG coordinator to stimulate the development of Bahá'í scholarship in a given field of study are limited only by his or her time and imagination. The Executive Committee is deeply grateful to those who will serve in this essential capacity.

Notes

1. The Universal House of Justice, letter to an individual dated 22 February 2005.
2. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Association for Bahá'í Studies–North America dated 25 December 1990.

Members' News

Several ABS members have recently received DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial awards from the Religion Communicators Association. **Betty J. Fisher (Albuquerque, New Mexico)** received an Award of Excellence for *World Order*, 2005, Vol. 36, No. 3. **Glen Fullmer (Evanston, Illinois)** received an Award of Excellence for the U.S. Bahá'í Web site. **Anne Gordon Perry (Duncanville, Texas)** received an Award of Excellence for *Green Acre on the Piscataqua* (Bahá'í Publishing Trust), and a Certificate of Merit for *Orison*, issue #11 as well as her work on the Portsmouth Peace Treaty. On 23 January 2006. **Nossrat Peseschkian (Germany)** was presented with the Cross of Merit on the ribbon of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in the office of the Prime Minister of the State of Hesse for services rendered in the field of medical science over the past several decades. The distinction was awarded by the President of the Federal Republic "in recognition for extraordinary services to the nation and its people."

Calendar of Events

"Reconciling Unity and Justice"

Fourth Annual North American Bahá'í Law Conference

24–26 March 2006

Berkeley, California

For information, contact: conference organizers, e-mail: <bahaiconference2006@gmail.com>; Web site: <http://www.berkeleybahais.org/pages/>

"Borderless Communities"

Annual Conference of ABS–UK

17–19 June 2006

Institute of Commonwealth Studies
London, England, UK

Contact: Jane O'Hara, Conference Registrar, e-mail: <janefohara@blueyonder.co.uk>

"Religion and the Evolution of Consciousness"

30th Annual Conference of ABS–North America

10–13 August 2006

San Francisco Airport Marriott
San Francisco, California, USA

Contact: Association for Bahá'í Studies, tel.: 613-233-1903; e-mail: <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>. Web site: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca>

"Moral Education: Collaboration of Family, School, and Community"

14th Annual Conference of ABS–Japan

6–8 October 2006

Yamaguchi, Japan

Contact: Nozomu Sonda, e-mail: <sonda_nozomu@ybb.ne.jp>

Bahá'í Colloquy at American Academy of Religion

18–21 November 2006

Washington, D.C., USA

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