

# ABS Bulletin

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

## Association for Bahá'í Studies **40** 40th ANNUAL CONFERENCE MONTREAL • AUGUST 2016

### Announcing 2016 Conference Program

An exciting program is in store for participants at the 40th Annual ABS Conference, being held 11-14 August at Le Centre Sheraton hotel in Montréal. If you have not yet made plans to attend, don't delay! Visit <http://bahai-studies.ca/upcoming-conference-registration/> to register online.

The annual conference brings together people of many backgrounds to explore the implications of the Bahá'í teachings for a variety of disciplines, professions and fields of inquiry; to develop capacities for examining ideas, concepts and theories operating within the scholarly and professional disciplines; and to contribute to the development of a growing body of knowledge associated with Bahá'í thought.

#### Thursday Sessions

Workshops on Thursday morning include a session on "Participating in Academic and Professional Discourses," in which participants will study and consult about recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice regarding participation in academic and professional discourses—a primary focus of the Association for Bahá'í Studies.

A second workshop on "Tablets of the Divine Plan: A Centennial Perspective," examines the impact these Tablets have had on the Bahá'í community and the world in the century since 'Abdu'l-Bahá first wrote them.

The Thursday afternoon program includes several workshops, (see "Breakout Sessions" on page 4) and Working Group sessions. The purpose of the Working Groups is to examine some aspects of the discourse in specific fields and to reflect on the implications the Bahá'í revelation holds for their disciplines. The following groups will reflect on their work and make plans for future gatherings: Economics, Education, Health, Law, Media, Religion, and Technology. New participants are welcome.

The conference opening plenary presentation on Thursday evening features Ms. Bani Dugal, a lawyer who has served since 1994 at the Bahá'í International Community's UN Office. The title of Ms. Dugal's address is "Reflections on Engagement in Discourses at the International Level."

#### Friday Sessions

The first panel on Friday morning is on "Social Justice and Education." Much of scholarship in the field of education focuses on the relationship between schools and society, and on the disparities in access, opportunity, and educational experience. In light of changing community demographics, how do we create educational environments that promote equity and holistic development? How can Bahá'í educators and researchers contribute to knowledge in this field? What insights gained by Bahá'í communities could be shared in fields such as social justice education and human rights education? How can we address educational equity in a more constructive way?

Panelists include Dr. Chitra Golestani, lecturer, educational consultant and a co-founder of the Paulo Freire Institute (PFI) at UCLA—an

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*Bani Dugal*

organization committed to social justice education, locally and globally; Elena Toukan, a PhD student in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, and Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad, Associate Dean and Professor of International and Multicultural Education at the University of San Francisco.

The second panel on Friday morning, “From Truth to Reconciliation: Indigenous Peoples and the [Spiritual] Future of Canada,” reflects on the recent Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Canada’s residential schools for indigenous children and the disturbing history it has exposed of abuse that has scarred generations of indigenous communities. The

Commission called on Canadians to address these past injustices in furtherance of reconciliation and healing. What is the path ahead from oppression to empowerment? What role does spirituality play in this transformation? What are some of the contributions that indigenous people can make to the future of Canada?

The panel includes, Ms. Marie Wilson, Commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, award-winning journalist, university lecturer and senior executive; Mr. Eloge Butera, a survivor of the genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda and a human rights activist, and Mr. Bob Watts, professor and interim Executive Director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The panel will be chaired by Dr. Payam Akhavan, professor of International Law and counsel before the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

### **Hasan M. Balyuzi Lecture**

Dr. Farzam Arbab will deliver the Balyuzi memorial lecture, “The Intellectual Life of the Bahá’í Community” on Friday evening. Dr. Arbab is the founder of the Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias (FUNDAEC). He was elected to the Universal House of Justice in 1993 and served on that body until 2013.



*Farzam Arbab*

### **Saturday Sessions**

On Saturday morning Dr. Steven Phelps, physicist, researcher, and translator of the Bahá’í Writings, will deliver a talk titled, “The Word that Shineth and Flasheth Amidst the Books of Men’: Text, Translation and the Nature of Reality.” This presentation will explore questions in the context of the translation program at the Bahá’í World Centre, guided by the Writings of the Central Figures of the

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*Montréal Skyline (Courtesy of Tourism Montréal)*



*Steven Phelps*

Bahá'í Faith. What is the relationship between language and reality? What distinguishes the words uttered by the Prophets? How are old words used in new ways in the Bahá'í Writings, and what implications does all this have for the translation of the Sacred Writings?

There are two panels scheduled on Saturday morning. The first one is on the theme of "Citizenship and Participation." Citizenship is widely upheld as an important value in many societies, and it is a central concept in many fields of study. What are some of the prevalent ways in which citizenship is defined and analyzed in the social sciences and humanities? How does citizenship relate to thinking about the empowerment of populations to participate in processes of social transformation? What aspects of a Bahá'í conceptual framework come to the fore when examining the discourse on citizenship?

Panelists include Dr. Gerald Filson, Director of Public Affairs, Bahá'í Community of Canada; Dr. Arash Abizadeh, Associate Professor of Political Science at McGill University; Mr. Carl Murrell, Principal Representative United Nations Office of the Bahá'ís of the United States. The panel will be chaired by Afsoon

Houshidari, lawyer and Counsel for Department of Justice, Canada.

The second panel addresses the theme, "Technologies and Values." New and old technologies alike play increasingly important roles in our lives, both individually and collectively. In what ways are the designers of these technologies influenced by particular values? How do technologies, in turn, influence the values of their users? How can we be more reflective about our technological choices? And, in turn, how should we think about technology design in ways that are coherent with the Bahá'í teachings?

The panelists are: Ms. Mitra Naeimi Solomon and Mr. Mark Towfiq, who have extensive experience founding, leading and directing companies in the San Francisco Bay area technology industry and who, along with their co-panelist Mr. Matthew Weinberg, have served on the Bahá'í Internet Agency. Mr. Weinberg currently serves as the Agency's Program Director.

The program for Saturday concludes with an artistic celebration of the 40th anniversary of the ABS conference, featuring a variety of artists sharing their work and speaking about how it relates to society. The 2016 Awards for Distinguished Scholarship in the Book



*Sona Arbab*

and in the Graduate Thesis categories will also be presented to the recipients of these awards.

### **Sunday Sessions**

The Sunday morning plenary session includes a panel on the subject, "Art, Beauty, and the Human Spirit." How do Bahá'í insights into the relationship between beauty and the human spirit inform our approach to art? What makes good art? This question has attracted the interest of philosophers throughout the ages. How important are novelty, usefulness, and intrinsic beauty to making good art? What is the role of art in the development of community life? How can and should art influence society?

Panelists: Siamak Hariri is founding partner of Hariri Pontarini Architects and best known for his architectural work on the Bahá'í House of Worship in Santiago, Chile. Leili Towfiq is a skilled ceramicist and artist who works at the Ceramics Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, Massachusetts. Sky Glabush teaches studio art at the University of Western Ontario and as an artist grapples with concepts of art and spirituality.

Dr. Sona Arbab, adviser to the Moral Education Research Center at the Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences, and former Director of the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre will deliver the concluding presentation of the conference, "Advancing in Bahá'í-Inspired Education." She will discuss features related to the concept of "Bahá'í-inspired education" that has allowed Bahá'ís to participate in numerous educational projects within a common evolving framework, knowing that the emergence of "Bahá'í education" is but a distant goal. To advance in Bahá'í-inspired education, however, one must go beyond the incorporation of a few principles in programs that basically follow educational trends. Rigorous

search—in light of the Teachings and in accordance with accumulating scientific knowledge—is needed for elements of an educational process that will help generation after generation to progressively acquire the attributes of “a new race of men.”

## Program for Children and Junior Youth

Be sure to register your children and junior youth for the educational Children and Junior Youth Program at the annual conference. This program will include speakers and artists from the main conference as well as other activities addressing the conference theme. Important note to parents: children and junior youth **must** be preregistered by 31 July 2016.

## Visits to the Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Montréal

Take advantage of your stay in Montréal to visit the only Bahá’í Shrine in the West, the Maxwell home. The Shrine will have extended visiting hours over the conference period and one day before and after the conference dates. Contact and visiting hour information can be found at [www.bahaimontreal.org](http://www.bahaimontreal.org).



# Breakout Sessions at the Conference

## Thursday Sessions

- Cynthia Barnes-Slater, “‘Work as Worship’: Advancing Spiritual Life/Work Coherence”
- Trip Barthel, “The Cutting Edge of Consultation: Reconciling Mercy and Justice”
- Lameh Fananapazir, “Renewal of Islám, Christianity and Judaism: A Primary Goal of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation”
- Shastri Purushotma, Sean Gallagher, and Sharaf Funk, “Tablets of the Divine Plan: A Centennial Perspective”

## Friday & Saturday Sessions

- Mariam Ashtiani, “Contemporary Racism and Notions of Justice: A Bahá’í Framework”
- Samuel Benoit, Abbas Khatamian, Iren Koltermann, & Gordon Naylor, Panel on “The Social Enterprise Model as a Means of Social Action”

- Lita Cameron, Tina Shahidyazdani, Shirin Madjzoub, Sana Rezai, Panel on “Exploring the Discourse on Health Equity”
- Joe Carter and Hongyu He, “Contributing to Social Discourse in China”
- Berkeley Churchill & Adib Behjat, “Cybersecurity and Privacy from a Bahá’í Perspective”
- Francois Couillard and Samira Khajehi, “Consultative Session on Ethics and Practice in Business”
- Maile Daugherty, “Storytelling around the 21st Century Fireside: Using Filmic Storytelling and World-Building Concepts to Connect with Media Savvy Audiences”
- Valerie Davis, “Influences that Shape Leaders’ Constructions of Power”
- Sherna Deamer, “Justice in Action: One Use of Technology”
- Livia Dittmer, “World Citizenship as Capacity: A Study of the Interrelations of the Three Protagonists and their Impact on Youths’ Connection to the World”
- Clark Donnelly, Mary Darling, Esther Maloney, Jordan Baese, Hashem Selph, and Michael Karlberg, Panel on “Video/Film Production: Seeking Coherence”
- Shiva Dustdar, “Ethical Finance: Myth or Reality?”
- “Economies: What They Are and How They Work” - Open Consultative Session
- Chuck Egerton, Poster presentation on

- “The Gender Analogies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Two Hands/Two Wings: Implications for Authoring A New Masculinity”
- Danielle Ewenin, “Realizing Justice—Murdered and Missing Women and Girls in Canada”
- Vahid Farzaneh, “The Sifter of Wheat and the ‘Tablet of God’”
- Gerald Filson and Julia Berger, Panel on “Engaging the Discourse on the Role of Religion in Society: Experience, Analysis, and Exploration”
- Abdu’l-Missagh Ghadirian, “Euthanasia and the Soul”
- Omid Ghaemmaghami, Foad Seddigh, Todd Lawson, and Sam Hindawi, Panel on “Reflections on the Writings of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh”
- Daniel Grolin, “The History of the Concept of Religion and its Effect on Discourses Pertaining to the Bahá’í Faith”
- Andrew Hatala, Shawheen James, and Mona Fathieh, “Contemporary Psychological Sciences and the Centrality of Spirituality”
- Sharon Hatcher, “Integrating Spirituality in Medicine: The New Frontier in Medical Education Renewal, Perspectives of a Bahá’í Physician Educator”
- Jay Howden, “Reasoned Faith, Deep Fiction, Essays to Love: Reading Marilynne Robinson”
- Michael Karlberg, “Media Studies: Toward a Coherent Normative Framework”
- Brian Kempf, Oak Ritchie, Bahareh Adamiardestani, and Ashiyani Rahmani-Shirazi, Panel on “An Inquiry into the Role of Technology in Society”
- Jena Khadem Khodadad, “The Mystery of Consciousness: Learning from Neuroscience and Insights from the Bahá’í Faith on the Puzzle of Higher Consciousness”
- Mona Kiani, “Educating for Social Action”
- Sohrab Kourosh, “The Seven Valleys of Bahá’u’lláh: The Blueprint of Bahá’í Theology”
- Emily Lample, Borna Nouredin, and Elena Toukan, Panel on “Learning to Draw on the Revelation in Contributing to a Discourse on Science Education”
- Margot Leonard, “La consultation bahá’íe: une voie de maturité spirituelle”/ “Bahá’í Consultation: A Way to Spiritual Maturity”
- Darius Loghmanee, “A Conceptual Framework to Optimize Sleep Health”
- Shamim Maani, “A New Prosperity: Financial Markets, Wealth Inequality and the Role of Huququ’lláh in Establishing Economic Justice”
- Hoda Mahmoudi, “Emerging Trends in Global Governance and World Order in Relation to the Bahá’í Concept of the Lesser Peace”
- Aaron Marks, “More Than Just Words: Language as Identity”
- Jay McGregor, Jian Mostaghim, and Bayan Mostaghim, Panel on “The Artist in Us”
- Patricia Ann McIlvride, “Depression, Stigma, and the Soul”
- Larry Miller, “Creating Sustainable Wealth”
- Vasu Mohan, “Six Revolutionary Teachings on Gender Equality”
- Kayhan Nadji, “Architecture of Edward and William Sutherland Maxwell”
- Kevin Naimi, “Transforming Humanity: Reflections on a Bahá’í Approach to Social Theory”
- Nima Naimi, “Freedom of Speech, Social Media and Spirituality”
- Tara Nault and Michele Nault McIsaac, “Weaving a Road to Reconciliation”
- Gordon Naylor, “Creating Coherence among Spirituality, Morality and Academics in Secondary Education: The Nancy Campbell Academy Experience”
- Daniel Perell and Saphira Rameshfar, “Peace and Security: Building Resilient Communities”



*Montréal Skyline (Courtesy of Tourism Montréal)*

Anne Gordon Perry, "Where History Meets Art: Creating Work Based on Historical Sources"

Vahid Ranjbar, "Plato, Modern Physics, and Bahá'u'lláh"

Shadi Salehian, Kamiar Alaei, and Arash Alaei "Social Action in Iran: Substance Abuse, Addiction and Mental Illness"

Benjamin Schewel, Geoffrey Cameron, and Julia Berger, Panel on "Religion and Public Discourse in an Age of Global Transition: Reflections on Bahá'í Practice and Thought"

Kamran Sedig, "Nature, Science, Religion, Will, Love, Fate, and Predestination"

Tina Shahidyazdani, Erfan Farhangpour, and Darius Loghmanee, Panel on "From Contention to Collaboration: Rethinking the Approach to Hospital Administration"

Victoria Talwar, "Foundations of Trust: Reflections from Bahá'í Writings and Psychological Science on the Pivotal Role of Trust in our Lives"

Shaheen Tedjarati, "Shoghi Effendi's 'Hands': The Ministry of Custodians—Six Years that Changed History and Shaped a Faith's Destiny, A Case Study of Unparalleled Selfless Leadership and Succession"

Shadi Toloui-Wallace, "A Sacred Charge: Developing Musical Capacity within You and Your

Community"

Emad Toukan, "Agile Methodologies in the Workplace and the Bahá'í Faith"

Jordan van den Hoonaard, "The Moral Implications of Technology Interpreted through Heidegger & Levinas"

John Walker, "In Search of a Common Morality"

Nazanin Zargarpour, "Practices that Build Capacity in Youth: How the Activities of the Five Year Plan Facilitate the Development of Essential Competencies"

For latest updates please check the ABS website <http://bahai-studies.ca/upcoming-conference/>

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