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Bahá'í Publishing

Press Release

Groundbreaking Book Explores Contributions
of African-Americans to the Emergence of the
Bahá'í Faith in North America

Fascinating Views from the Intersection of Black History and the History of Religion

Wilmette, IL, August 30, 2006: Rarely does a book cover a historically and culturally important topic that has never been written about before. Yet *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá'ís in North America, 1898-2000* (Bahá'í Publishing, \$17, soft cover, ISBN 1-931847-26-6), accomplishes precisely this through an absorbing collection of glimpses into the lives of some extraordinary individuals who devoted themselves to a common cause and made outstanding contributions toward building a unified society.

Edited by Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, a professor of English at Miami University in Ohio, and Richard Thomas, a professor of history at Michigan State University, the book brings to light the stories of a diverse group of people including attorney Louis Gregory, poet Robert Hayden, jazz great Dizzy Gillespie, Broadway actress Dorothy Champ, and Canadian singer Eddie Elliot, to name a few.

Lights of the Spirit is divided into two sections. Part one offers a helpful introduction to the Bahá'í Faith and six highly readable essays that comprehensively describe the black experience in the North American Bahá'í community. Chapters by Etter-Lewis, Thomas, and others address African-Americans and the development of the faith in the U.S. and Canada, contributions of African-American women, and the role African-Americans in the global expansion of the Bahá'í Faith.

More . . .

Part two contains documents from nine historically prominent African-American Bahá'ís, providing insights into how these remarkable individuals perceived themselves and the larger communities in which they lived. Here readers will find creative and social commentaries, letters, and family histories. Many of the documents are previously unpublished. Written from a first-person point of view, they preserve a largely unknown history that expands our notions of African-American religious traditions.

The unique content of the book will appeal to readers interested in Black history, race relations, and the history of religion in North America.

To receive a review copy of *Lights of the Spirit*, or to schedule an interview or author event with Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis or Richard Thomas, please contact Tim Moore, Bahá'í Publishing sales and marketing manager, at 847-425-7964. E-mail: tmoore@usbnc.org.

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