

# Some Notable Bahá'ís

From the First Hundred Years  
of the  
Miami Bahá'í Community  
1919-2019

*Stories of some  
outstanding Bahá'ís in Miami history  
written for the Celebration of the Centennial  
of the Bahá'í Faith in Miami, Florida  
February 24, 2019*



Howard MacNutt



Louise Boyle



Louis Gregory



Dana A. Dorsey



Dr. Alain Locke



Dr. Zia Bagdadi



Cpt. James E. Scott



Dr. Harold Guinyard

Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of  
Miami-Dade County (Central)  
Miami, Florida

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# The Centennial of the Bahá'í Faith in Miami

It was the discovery of a Tablet (letter) from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Miami Bahá'í Louise Boyle, sent in February of 1919, which inspired the Bahá'ís of South Florida to host a celebration of the Centennial of the Miami Bahá'í community on February 24, 2019. The Tablet is presented on page 4 of this document.

While commemorating one hundred years of the Bahá'í presence in South Florida, the event was also designed to further bonds between the Miami Bahá'ís and the greater Miami African-American community. For this reason the event took place in the Historic Hampton House, a "Green Book" hotel which throughout the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s was a meeting place for a long list of influential entertainers, athletes, and civil rights leaders. Among those who were guests at the Hampton House were Cannonball Adderley, Sam Cooke, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Marvin Gaye, Muhammad Ali, Jackie Robinson, Althea Gibson, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who wrote his "I Have a Dream" speech in a room which is still preserved there. Today the Hampton House is a center for educational, cultural, and historical activities, serving both South Florida residents and visitors to the greater Miami area.

The event was hosted by Mr. Keith Clarke, a member of the Miami Bahá'í Community who is also the Managing Director of the Miami Jazz and Film Society and a regular organizer of cultural events at Hampton House. The program included two Bahá'ís, Ms. Alice Haxton and Dr. Thomas Carsey, who both spoke about the history of Bahá'ís in South Florida and in the United States. There were also two talks by prestigious Afro-Americans in the South Florida Region. Black historian Dr. Marvin Dunn, the author of three books on Black history in Florida, spoke about the interactions of different ethnic groups in Miami, placing the current situation into a framework of historical changes. Dr. Enid Pinckney, who spearheaded the effort to save the Historic Hampton House, spoke about her own contributions to also save the Miami Circle, the Lemon City Cemetery, and other noted Miami structures. Also included in the program was a musical presentation by jazz singer La Vie, whose performance highlighted the event and was enthusiastically received by all.

In the following pages, some of the key Bahá'í personalities of the past are described. They show not only their historic significance, but their contribution to the Bahá'í Faith.

We hope you find these stories interesting and informative.

## 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Miami

To the maid-servant of God, Louise D. Boyle, Miami, Florida

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Your letter dated December 1918, was received. Thou hast written that in these days, in view of these terrible battles and the extinction of the fire of war, a new capability has sprung in men. It is evident that not until rain, snow, cold, storm and hurricane come to pass will the capacity for spring be attained. In winter divine Providence prepares for the advent of the life-giving spring. Similarly this terrible war has awakened people's minds and has given rise to sentiments of Universal Peace so that the divine teachings may exert an effect upon the peoples of all races.

At a time when I was in Europe and America, I raised high my voice in all temples and gatherings and it was published and circulated in the papers that--"O ye concourse of listeners! An imminent danger lies ahead. The whole of Europe has turned into a huge arsenal which a single spark will set ablaze. The flame of war shall attain supreme height and Europe shall be convulsed and this Balkan strife shall lead to universal war; the foundations of the world of humanity shall quake, cities shall be demolished and villages shall be razed to the ground; fathers shall lose their sons and sons shall lose their fathers; mothers shall wail and children shall cry and lament. O ye listeners! Endeavour perchance, God willing, ye may prevent this fire from spreading and this storm from raging!"

Whatever was explicitly recorded in the epistles and Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh concerning future events was mentioned, but these exhortations were not accepted until this conflagration was set up. At present all people have realized that war destroys the foundations of mankind and that men are in need of universal peace and similarly of the rest of the divine teachings.

Strive, therefore, that the light of the oneness of the world of humanity may be made resplendent, that misunderstanding among the religions and races of the world may be eliminated, that the nether world may reflect the realm on high and the Sun of Truth may shine over all regions.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbání, 1 February 1919.

Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

## William and Margaret Atwater (1858-1945)

William and Margaret Atwater were Miami's first Bahá'ís. The obituary (below), from the Miami News newspaper, is most of what we know about the couple. According to Lucille Buffin, the Atwaters joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1913 and moved to Miami in 1914. Bahá'í activities began when Louise Boyle joined them in Miami in 1918. Charles Mason Remy, a Chicago architect and Bahá'í teacher, visited Miami in 1919. He described meeting with local Bahá'ís including the Atwaters, Louise Boyle, Julia Grundy and Julia Harris. By 1926, there was a Local Spiritual Assembly, with Olive Ketz as secretary; weekly Bahá'í meetings were held in the Dorsey Hotel. Their daughter, also called Margaret, was subsequently active in Bahá'í events in Miami.

**WILLIAM MONTGOMERY ATWATER**, 87, died at his home, 44 NW 10th ave., yesterday, following a long illness. A native of New Haven, Conn., he came to Miami 31 years ago from Vero Beach. He retired in 1937 as sales manager of Florida Power & Light Co. following 23 years with the company. He graduated from Yale university in 1879 and was a 33rd degree Mason, honorary member of the Scottish Rite Supreme council and wore the 33rd degree Supreme Council official cap. He was a life member of the Acacia club and a member of Bahai Community. Surviving are three sons, William, Montgomery and Charles, all of Miami; a daughter, Miss Margaret Atwater, and four grandchildren. Masonic services will be conducted at 4 p. m. tomorrow in Philbrick Funeral chapel. Burial will be in Woodlawn park.

*William Atwater  
obituary, Miami  
News, November  
29, 1945.*

## Louise D. Boyle

(1875-1953)



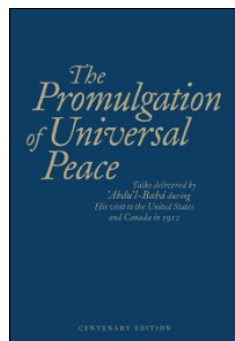
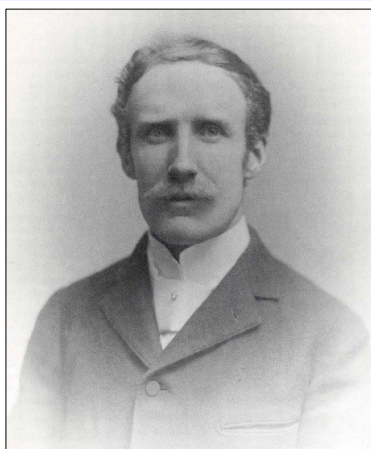
Louise Dixon Boyle was born in 1875 in Princess Anne, Maryland. She was the daughter of Charlotte Brittingham Dixon, a founder of the Washington, DC, Bahá'í community. She became a member of the Bahá'í Faith in Chicago around 1897. She accompanied her mother and sister on their first pilgrimage to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land in 1900. She married Eldridge R. Boyle in 1902, and returned from another pilgrimage in July 1909. Boyle met with 'Abdu'l-Bahá three times during His journeys in America in 1912.

Mrs. Boyle went on to be elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. She was appointed to many national committees and initiatives, and attended the first meeting of the Race Amity Conference in 1921. Following this, Boyle often worked on or with the national Race Amity Committee and successor committees with Louis Gregory and Alain Locke.

She was deeply interested in social issues and in the progressive ideas that were current in society, and wrote many articles on these as well as on Bahá'í themes. Her first article was *Meeting the Capacity of the Seeker*, published in 1913. It emphasized the diversity of humanity and how to address the troubled position of religion in society. She was also active in the Montessori movement, the Girl Scouts, the ladies auxiliary of a woman's clinic, and the scholarship fund for the Tarbiat School in Iran.

Mrs. Boyle traveled to the South in service to the Bahá'í Faith several times. She lived in Miami beginning in 1919 and attended many Bahá'í public meetings. Notably, she received a tablet (letter) from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, probably in February 1919. Louise Boyle died in 1953.

## Howard MacNutt (1858/9-1926)



Howard MacNutt was born in Philadelphia in about 1858. He was a bookkeeper and an excellent cricket player. In 1890, Howard married Mary Stokes and they moved to New York. There, he became a business partner with early Bahá'ís Thornton Chase, William Hoar and Arthur Dodge. In 1905, he joined the Bahá'í Faith and went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

MacNutt, along with Louis Gregory, attended meetings of the Black community of Washington, DC. They gave presentations about the Bahá'í Faith to the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, the preeminent debating society and forum for racial issues in Washington.

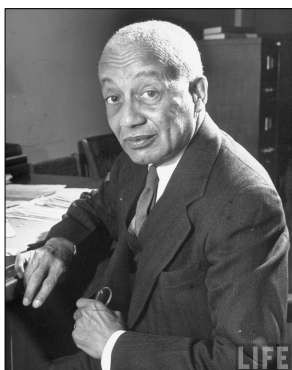
Howard assisted 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his visit to America in 1912, and published a collection of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks in the book *Promulgation of Universal Peace* (1922), which is still in print.

In 1924 the MacNutts traveled to Miami and the east coast. The next year, he assisted with the Race Amity Convention in Washington, DC. In 1926, he returned to Florida and began to reach out to the Black community of Miami, along with Louis Gregory, Alain Locke and others. A letter to Dana Dorsey from the NSA of the U.S. in 1926 mentioned the work of MacNutt.

On December 26, 1926, as he was crossing into the Black part of town for a Bahá'í meeting, he was struck down by a motorcycle and subsequently died. His memorial service in Miami was attended by many members of the Black community, and was the first integrated service at the Combs Funeral Home.

## Dr. Alain Locke

(1885 – 1954)



Alain Locke was born in Philadelphia in 1885. In 1907, Locke graduated from Harvard University with degrees in English and philosophy, and was honored as a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society and a recipient of Harvard's prestigious Bowdoin Prize. He became the first African-American Rhodes Scholar. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1918, the year he became a Bahá'í.

Locke was a key figure in the "Harlem Renaissance," the artistic explosion that took place in Harlem from the 1920s to the 1930s. The movement included many outstanding Black writers and artists such as Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston. A significant contribution of Locke was his anthology *The New Negro* in 1925. Subsequently his works included *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro* (1925), *Negro Art Past and Present* (1936), *The Negro and His Music* (1936), and *The Negro in the Three Americas* (1944). Locke's Bahá'í writings include *Impressions of Haifa* (1924), *Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle* (1933), *The Orientation of Hope* (1936), and *Lessons in World Crisis* (1945). He was Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Howard University, 1928-1953.

In 1921, Alain Locke helped the American Bahá'í community sponsor the first Race Amity Conferences in Washington, DC, the first of many Race Amity Conferences.

Locke accompanied Louis Gregory in spreading the Bahá'í Faith on many trips to the South between 1925 and 1926. In Miami, accompanied by Louis Gregory, he evidently met with Dana Dorsey. Locke visited the Bahá'í World Center twice (1923 and 1934).

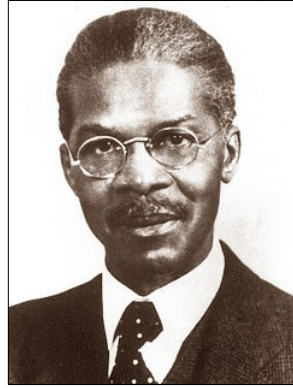
Locke retired from Howard University in 1953 and died on June 9, 1954. At Howard University, the main building for the College of Arts and Sciences is dedicated to his legacy: "Alain Locke Hall".

In a speech in 1944 he stated, "Just as world-mindedness must dominate and remold nation-mindedness, so we must transform eventually race-mindedness into human-mindedness".

[Picture: cover of Life Magazine, November 1946.]



## Louis Gregory (1874-1951)



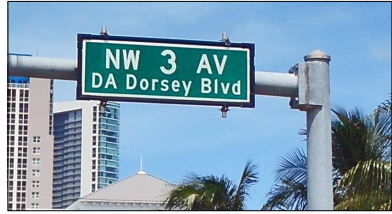
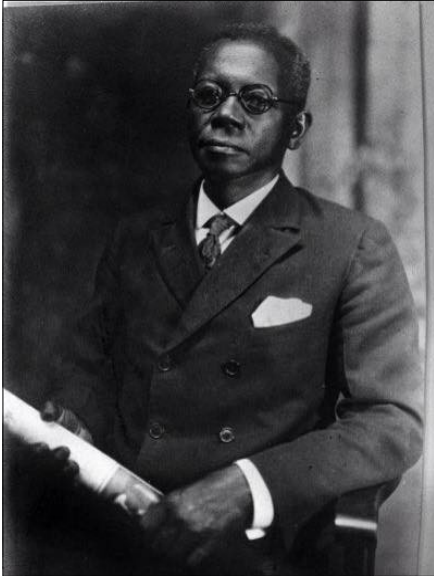
Louis Gregory was born on June 6, 1874, less than a decade after his parents were freed from slavery. His mother, Mary Elizabeth, and his African grandmother were slaves on George Washington Dargan's plantation in Darlington, SC. He attended the first integrated public school in Charleston, SC, the Avery Institute in Charleston, and Fisk University in Nashville. He subsequently studied law at Howard University, one of the few universities to accept Black graduate students, and received his LL.B. degree in March 1902. He was admitted to the bar and practiced in Washington, DC, where he encountered the Bahá'í Faith.

Gregory was one of the first African-Americans in the United States to embrace the Bahá'í Faith. In 1911, he made a pilgrimage to Haifa to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá and visit the Holy Shrines (the second African-American do to so). In 1912 Gregory married Louisa Matthew, becoming the first Bahá'í interracial couple. He was elected to the Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly many times beginning in 1922. In 1927, he was appointed to serve on the National Committee on Interracial Amity and became its Executive Secretary. In his later years, he travelled to Africa and Haiti teaching the Bahá'í Faith.

Louis Gregory made many teaching trips to the South, visiting Miami on several occasions. In 1926, he and Dr. Alain Locke apparently met with Dana Dorsey. He died in 1951 at the age of 77.

# Dana Albert Dorsey

(1872–1940)



*Dana Dorsey Boulevard.*

August 17, 1926.

Mr. D. A. Dorsey,  
1009 North West Second Avenue,  
Miami, Florida.

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

It was our privilege on Monday last to meet with Mr. Howard MacNitt and learn from him of your interest in the Bahá'í teachings and your desire to establish some activity of permanent usefulness to the members of your race.

We understood from Mr. MacNitt that you wanted some suggestions from us for you to consider in this matter and we advanced several ideas which Mr. MacNitt will transmit to you direct.

The members of the National Spiritual Assembly instructed me to express to you our cordial thanks for this opportunity to assist even indirectly in an effort which we feel certain will have great importance and be a vital factor in the bringing about of better social and spiritual conditions in this country which we all so ardently desire.

If we can be of any further service to you I hope you will feel free at any time to turn to us for any cooperation that lies in our power to extend.

Faithfully yours,

Secretary.

*Letter from the U.S. National Bahá'í Center to Dana Dorsey, 1926.*



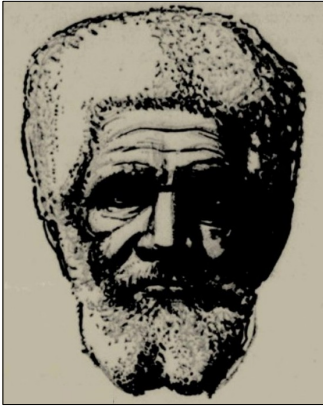
*Dana Dorsey crypt, Lincoln Memorial Park. (photo: Linda Franks Beebe)*

Dana Dorsey was Miami's first Black millionaire and a major African-American property developer. He owned the Dorsey Hotel and the Negro Savings Bank, and once owned Fisher Island. He served as chairman of the Colored Advisory Committee to the Dade County School Board.

Dorsey donated the land for the Dorsey Library, which opened in 1941, Dorsey Park (NW 17 & 1st Ave.), and the Dorsey High School (now the D. A. Dorsey Technical College, 7100 NW 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Miami FL).

Dorsey became a member of the Bahá'í Faith around 1926; he was one of three Black Bahá'ís on the rolls of Miami Bahá'ís in 1928-29. Weekly Bahá'í meetings were held during 1926 at the Dorsey Hotel. When Mr. Dorsey died in 1940, flags were lowered to half-staff all over Miami. He was buried in Lincoln Memorial Park, Miami's African American cemetery during segregation.

# Major Alfred Christopher Goggins| (1838-?)



*Former Slaves of Miami, Group picture.*

Major Goggins was born a slave near Columbia, SC, in 1838. During the Civil War, he was sent as a spy by the Confederate Army to Washington, DC, and met Lincoln several times. Awarded a scholarship to Amherst College, he became their first Black alumnus. He joined the Army in 1878, serving 14 years as First Sergeant of the Black Horse Troop. He served in the Spanish-American War, and was honorably discharged in 1913. During WWI, at the age of 79, he was sent to France as a Brevet-Major and placed in command of 1,000 men. In 1936, Major Goggins and Baptist preacher J. Drake created the “Ex-Slave Association of Greater Miami.”

Major Goggins acted in early silent films. In *Down Upon the Suwanee River* (1925), he played one of the first positive African-American characters in a mainstream American film. Other film credits include: *Where the Pavement Ends* (1923), in which Major Goggins played a Samoan chieftain; *The Exciters* (1923), *Bumble Shackle* (1924), and *Old Black Joe*, a “talkie” film that was never finished

Major Goggins was one of three Black members of the eleven-member Miami Bahá’í community in 1928-29, along with Dana Dorsey and Mrs. S. E. Thompson.

[Information from Pittsburgh Courier, April 9, 1932, and Stetson Kennedy, *Ex-Slaves Of Miami Organize*, Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life, vol. 17, No. 9, 1939.]

## Dr. Zíá Bagdádí (1882-1937)

Zia Bagdadi was born in Beirut (now in Lebanon) in 1882. His name, which means “light”, was given to him by Bahá'u'lláh. Dr. Bagdádí attended the American University of Beirut and graduated as a physician. In September 1909, on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s advice, he moved to Chicago to further his medical studies and soon emerged as a pillar of the Chicago Bahá’í community. A major translator of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s tablets into English and the editor of the Persian pages of *Star of the West*, he accompanied ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on much of His North American travels in 1912.



As a child, he had the bounty of visiting Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí, His home near ‘Akká. In his memoir, *Treasures of the East*, Dr. Bagdádí wrote, “I had the greatest honor and privilege to see Bahá'u'lláh and sit at His feet many days and nights in this Mansion. Here He used to hold my hand while walking to and fro in His large room, revealing Tablets, chanting the prayers with the most charming and melodious voice, while one of the attendants took them down. Here I saw Him teaching and blessing the pilgrims who came from all lands... I would stand in a corner with folded arms, my eyes fixed on His incomparable countenance, while the gentle breezes blew on His soft jet black hair which reached almost to the waist, flowing beneath the taj, like a crown, that covered His head and a part of His broad, full, high forehead.”

Dr. Bagdádí and Zeenat Khanum were married in the first Bahá’í marriage in Montreal, Canada, in 1914. They moved to Wilmette in 1921. During the “Red Summer” race riots of 1919, Dr. Bagdádí traveled frequently into black Chicago neighborhoods to provide food and medicine.

At the 1935 U.S. National Bahá’í Convention, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s “Tablets of the Divine Plan” were discussed and a call for pioneers announced. One of the first to answer the call was Dr. Bagdádí, who wished to pioneer to Miami. He immediately gave up his medical practice in Chicago and the couple moved to Miami, where he was active in promoting the Faith.

One day he asked the Miami community if they had ever received a letter from Shoghi Effendi. He said the Guardian would be burdened by questions about small personal problems, but he would welcome a letter telling of the progress of the Faith in Miami. To the community’s surprise, a letter was received soon after (1936).

Dr. Bagdádí stayed in Miami for about a year, but could not get a license to practice medicine in Florida because of the State-wide quota on new medical licenses. He and Zeenat moved to Augusta, Georgia, to serve the Faith in the American South, and at the age of he 53 died there.

## Captain James E. Scott (1890-1948)



James E. Scott was born in 1890 in Savannah, Georgia. He volunteered for military service in 1917, attaining the rank of Captain. He was the first Black officer to command a large force in the Army. After the war, he came to Miami. In 1925, Scott helped launch the Colored Association for Family Welfare, which later became known as the Negro Welfare Federation (NWF).

Captain Scott became the executive director, the NWF, which was renamed the James E Scott Community Association (JESCA) in his honor. In 1939, he founded the Liberty Square Consumers Cooperative Association. His services to the community were also commemorated in the naming of the James E. Scott Homes housing project as well as the James E. Scott Health Center in his honor.

Captain Scott became a member of the Bahá'í Faith late in life in the 1940s. His assistant at JESCA, Olive Alexander, managed the Center after his passing; she was also a Bahá'í and served for many years as chairperson of the Miami Spiritual Assembly.

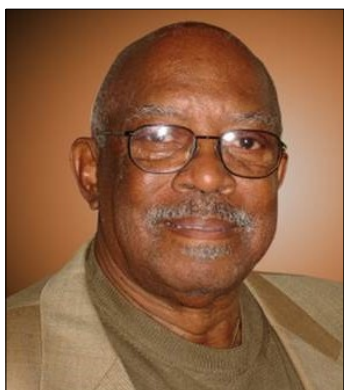
[Data from the Black Archives, [www.theblackarchives.org](http://www.theblackarchives.org).]



*James E. Scott Homes development, NW 22 Ave. and 75 St.*

# Dr. Harold Guinyard

(1932-2014)



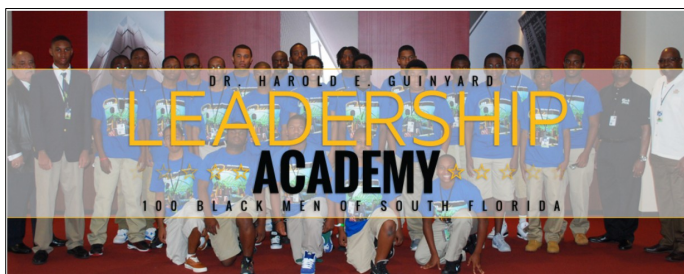
Harold (Hal) Guinyard grew up in Orlando, graduating from Jones High School in 1950. In 1955, he earned a B.S. degree at Bethune-Cookman College. In 1957, he began his career with the Miami Dade County Public Schools.

Early in his career he taught fourth grade at Douglas Elementary School. Later, at North Dade Junior-Senior High School, he taught physics, chemistry, and biology.

He proudly served as assistant principal at Miami Norland (1968-69), then as principal at both Miami Northwestern (1969-73) and Miami Central High Schools (1978-83). He subsequently served as a regional administrator until his retirement in 1995.

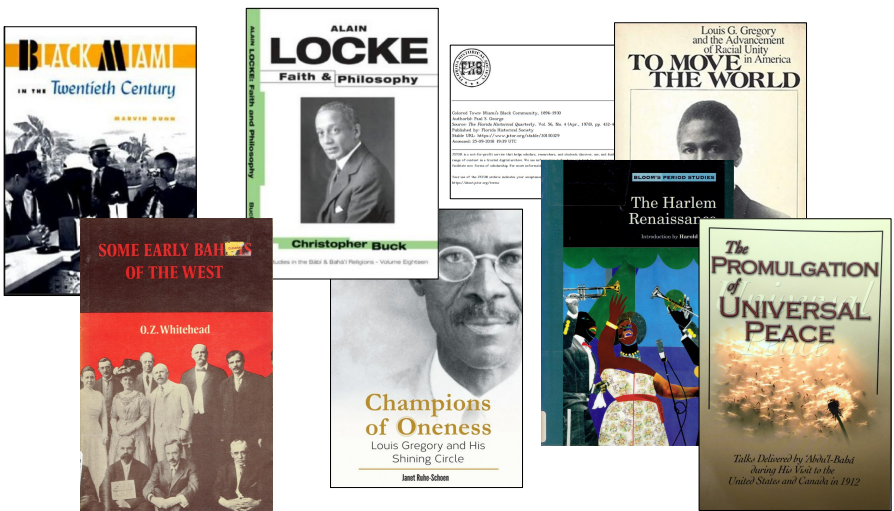
Besides being a devoted member of the Bahá'í Faith, Harold was a loyal member of 100 Black Men of South Florida, Miami Springs Rotary, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. He was preceded in death by his parents, sister, brother, and wife Allene Guinyard. Allene and her mother, Alberta Johnson, were also members of the Bahá'í Faith.

Dr. Guinyard's legacy is acknowledged in the Dr. Harold Guinyard Leadership Academy. For twenty years, this mentoring program has been sponsored by the 100 Black Men of South Florida. (<https://100blackmensf.org/programs/leadership-academy>).



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# An Overview of the Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith

The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition;  
the oneness of the entire human race;  
the basic unity of all religions;  
the condemnation of all forms of prejudice;  
the harmony which must exist between religion and science;  
the equality of men and women;  
the introduction of compulsory education;  
the adoption of a universal auxiliary language;  
the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty;  
a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations;  
the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship;  
the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society,  
and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations;  
the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all  
mankind—these are the essential elements of the Bahá'í Faith.

*The central theme of the Bahá'í Faith*

*Is that humanity is one single race and that the day has come  
for its unification in one global society.*

*God, Bahá'u'lláh said, has set in motion historical forces that are  
breaking down traditional barriers of race, class, creed, and nation  
and that will, in time, give birth to a universal civilization.*

*The principal challenge facing the peoples of the earth is  
to accept the fact of their oneness  
and to assist the processes of unification.*



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