

Even while taking a long hiatus from recording in the late 1980s, Baez continued her political activities. She participated in rallies for the nuclear freeze movement and played a significant role in 1985's Live Aid concert. Baez has also participated in a number of other human rights tours, including Amnesty International's A Conspiracy of Hope Tour in 1986. In 1991, Baez performed for crowds protesting the Persian Gulf War, and in 2003, she performed at two rallies in San Francisco protesting America's invasion of Iraq. In 2004, she participated in the filmmaker Michael Moore's Slacker Uprising Tour, advocating for young adults to vote for peace candidates in the national election. In 2005, she appeared at the anti-war protest started by Cindy Sheehan near President George W. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, participated in a tribute to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina held at the Temple in Black Rock City during the annual Burning Man festival, and participated in protests held in Washington, D.C., against the Iraq War.

She has spoken out against the death penalty. In 1992, she appeared at a vigil protesting the execution of Robert Alton Harris, who was the first man executed after the reinstatement of the death penalty in California, and in 2005, she participated in the protest against the execution of Tookie Williams at San Quentin prison in California. Baez still contributes a stipend from the royalties of her album *Come From the Shadows* to the Resource Center for Nonviolence in Santa Cruz, California.

Baez has earned many awards, including the American Civil Liberties Union's Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award in 1976, the Jefferson Award from the Institute of Public Service in 1980, the Lennon Peace Tribute Award in 1982, and the Chevalier from the Légion d'Honneur, France, in 1983. Eight of Baez's records have reached gold status for sales, and she has been nominated for six Grammys. In 1980, Baez was awarded two honorary doctorates: one from Antioch University and the other from Rutgers University.

—Carly A. Kocurek

*See also* Amnesty International; Civil Disobedience; Civil Rights Movement; Conscientious Objectors to War; Dylan, Bob; Nonviolence and Activism

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## BAHÁ'Í FAITH AND SOCIAL ACTION

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The Bahá'í is an independent world religion that promotes social justice through social action by advancing processes leading to world peace. In the Bahá'í value-hierarchy, social justice is the cardinal principle of human society. On the theory that all human actions flow from consciousness, Bahá'ís believe that world peace can only be established on a foundation of human solidarity—the harmony of races, religions, and nations. The purpose of justice, according to Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892), prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, is the achievement of unity in human society. International peace and security are unattainable, Bahá'u'lláh counsels, unless and until world unity is firmly established. Acting globally through interfaith alliances and national and international agencies, including the United Nations, Bahá'ís actively promote race unity, human rights, social and economic development, moral development, and the advancement of women. They draw international attention, in particular, to human rights violations against the Bahá'ís in Iran while advocating universal human rights for all. Bahá'ís aim to achieve these humanitarian goals through practical applications of Bahá'í principles of unity. Bahá'í philosopher Alain Locke (1885–1954), whose work is cited here to illustrate Bahá'í teachings, wrote that world peace depends on discovering necessary common values involved in the application of democracy on a world scale. World democracy thus entails building infrastructures that can best canalize efforts to achieve

social justice, to which Bahá'í institutions and programs of social action contribute.

### Bahá'ís at the United Nations

Ethics-based and religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) are playing increasingly significant roles in their consultative collaborations with the United Nations. As a RNGO, the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) represents a network of 182 democratically elected National Spiritual Assemblies that act on behalf of over 5.5 million Bahá'ís worldwide. Accordingly, the BIC is the voice of the worldwide Bahá'í community in international affairs. On the 60th anniversary of the United Nations in October 2005, the Bahá'í International Community issued a statement, "The Search for Values in an Age of Transition," presenting its recommendations for human rights, development, democracy, and collective security. Commending the international community's commitment to democracy, the BIC stressed that democracy is good governance—an essentially moral exercise (what Alain Locke calls a "moral democracy"). Democracy will succeed only if it is coefficient with personal integrity (gaining respect of the governed), moral principles, transparency, objective need assessments, and ethical applications of scientific resources. Democracy, according to the BIC, must be rooted in moral values that promote social welfare both within and beyond the nation-state. Without this principled anchor, democracy falls prey to the excesses of individualism and nationalism, which tear at the fabric of the community, both nationally and globally. As sociomoral forces, Bahá'í principles of unity serve as a moral bedrock for building a world democracy.

### Principles of Unity

In his epistle to Queen Victoria (c. 1869), Bahá'u'lláh endorsed parliamentary democracy as an ideal form of governance. Referring to his own mission as that of a "World Reformer," Bahá'u'lláh promulgated social principles that are wider in scope than the process of electing governments. The Bahá'í community, in a measured participation in political democracy, eschews

partisan politics as polarizing and divisive. While exercising their civic obligation in voting, individual Bahá'ís distance themselves from the political theater of party politics. Embracing democracy, they shun campaigning. Instead, Bahá'ís work with the body politic, applying Bahá'í principles to better society. These principles include the following:

1. Human unity
2. Social justice
3. Racial harmony
4. Interfaith cooperation
5. Gender equality
6. Wealth equity (economic justice)
7. Social and economic development
8. International law
9. Human rights
10. Freedom of conscience
11. Individual responsibility
12. Harmony of science and religion
13. International scientific cooperation
14. International standards/world intercommunication
15. International language
16. Universal education
17. Environmentalism
18. World commonwealth
19. World tribunal
20. World peace
21. Search after truth
22. Freedom of conscience
23. Love of God
24. Nobility of character (acquiring virtues)
25. Advancing civilization (individual purpose)
26. Work as worship
27. Ideal marriage
28. Family values
29. Model communities

30. Religious teleology (Progressive Revelation)
31. Bahá'í doctrinal integrity
32. Bahá'í institutional support (the "Covenant")
33. Promoting Bahá'í values

In 1925, Alain Locke stated that Bahá'í principles—and the leavening of America's national life with its power—are to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. Only in this way can the fine professions of American ideals best be realized.

### Bahá'ís in Iran

The Bahá'í Faith originated in Persia, now Iran, where the Bahá'í community has experienced a century and a half of persecution. In the years immediately following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, clerics, with state sanction, ordered the arbitrary arrest of Bahá'ís, the use of torture, and the execution of more than 200 members (particularly elected members of Bahá'í administrative councils)—sometimes demanding that families pay for the bullets used to kill their loved ones. Other actions taken against Bahá'ís include confiscation of property; seizure of bank assets; expulsion from schools and universities; denial of employment; cancellation of pensions and demands that the government be reimbursed for past pension payments; desecration and destruction of Bahá'í cemeteries and holy places; criminalization of Bahá'í activities, thereby forcing the dissolution of Bahá'í institutions; and pronouncement that Bahá'í marriages were illegal acts of prostitution. State-instigated incitements to violence took the form of relentless propaganda campaigns aimed at inflaming anti-Bahá'í passions to instigate mob violence and crimes against Bahá'ís.

A new and insidious anti-Bahá'í strategy was formalized in a secret 1991 memorandum from the Iranian Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council on "the Bahá'í question." Personally endorsed by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on February 25, 1991, this document advises government officials to expel Bahá'ís from universities once Bahá'í identity becomes known. The directive—still in force—instructs officials to refuse Bahá'ís

employment if they identify themselves as Bahá'ís, to bar their promotion to any position of influence, and to deny to all Bahá'ís the right to a higher education. No Bahá'í can, in practice, attend university in Iran. Iranian columnist Iqbal Latif calls Iran's denial of Bahá'ís' access to a university education "intellectual cleansing" of their ethnic brothers by the clergy-dominated regime. This phase of the anti-Bahá'í campaign has aptly been described as civil death—a cultural expurgation that collectively affects a community estimated to include more than 300,000 Iranians.

On March 20, 2006, the U.N. Special Reporter on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir, issued a press release regarding a confidential letter sent October 29, 2005, by the Chairman of the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces in Iran. The press release informed government officials that the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, had instructed Command Headquarters to identify all Bahá'ís and closely monitor their activities. In the wake of mounting media attacks on the Bahá'ís, such surveillance aggravates an already dangerous situation. Anti-Bahá'í propaganda campaigns have typically preceded government-led assaults on the Bahá'ís in Iran. In 2006, another U.N. special reporter reported that the regime is now confiscating family homes, thereby worsening the economic strangulation.

### A New Model of Local Democracy

In marked contrast to Iran's efforts to extirpate the Bahá'í community, the Bahá'í Faith, as a global, supranational community, represents a new social experiment. In its joint RINGO statement, "Family and Social Development" (1994), the BIC stresses that the values of democracy and social justice must first be taught at home. The family, says the BIC, is the first environment to teach the values of local democracy, human rights, social responsibility, tolerance, and peace, thus enabling individual members to become advocates for social justice. These values, seen as the spirit of democracy, extend to each local Bahá'í community. The Universal House of Justice (the world Bahá'í governing body) speaks of the Nineteen-Day Feast (a Bahá'í worship service and consultative

meeting held roughly every 3 weeks throughout the year) as an arena of democracy at the very root of society. This is where the Local Spiritual Assembly (the Bahá'í council annually elected by plurality vote with no campaigning allowed) and the members of the community meet on common ground, where individuals are free to offer their gifts of thought, whether new ideas or constructive criticism, to the building processes of an advancing civilization. Based on these and similar practices, the Universal House of Justice speaks of Bahá'u'lláh having prescribed a system that combines democratic practices with the application of knowledge through consultative processes.

### Interfaith Cooperation

In accordance with Bahá'u'lláh's call to peace and fellowship among religions, Bahá'ís have taken part in the Parliament of the World's Religions, the World Bank's World Faiths Development Dialogue, and the Committee of RINGOs at the United Nations. In 1950, the annually elected governing body of the American Bahá'í community, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (NSA) inaugurated World Religion Day to promote interfaith ecumenism. In April 2002, the Universal House of Justice issued a public letter addressed "To the World's Religious Leaders." This letter called on religious leaders worldwide to achieve common cause through a greater appreciation of their common ground and to unequivocally renounce all claims to exclusivity or finality, as such claims have precluded religious unity and have been the single greatest factor in justifying religious hatred and violence.

### America's World Role

On December 23, 2001, shortly after the infamous 9/11 terrorist attacks, the NSA of the Bahá'ís of the United States published a statement, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace," as a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*. It closes with an excerpt from a Bahá'í prayer: "May this American Democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be

the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the Most Great Peace." This prayer envisions America's role in building a world democracy—not by force, but by example, in accordance with universal, moral principles.

### Strengthening Human Rights

The BIC notes that the rise of democracy worldwide is a positive trend wherever nations have adopted free elections, representational governance, and strong human rights standards. In promoting social democracy, American Bahá'ís have taken leadership roles in advocating U.S. ratification of U.N. human rights treaties, including the U.N. Convention to Eliminate Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; and the International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Current ratification efforts center on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

### Promoting Race Unity

In 1921, the NSA of the United States and Canada inaugurated a series of race amity conferences in Washington, D.C., and throughout the United States, in a historic contribution to what Alain Locke (who joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1918) called a "racial democracy" or, more broadly, a "social democracy." The spirit of efforts (which Locke personally helped organize) to promote interracial harmony lives on today. In 1957, the NSA inaugurated Race Unity Day (second Sunday in June)—an event now recognized by the United Nations—to promote interracial harmony. In 1991, the NSA issued "The Vision of Race Unity," a statement addressed to all Americans. Since racism is really a global issue, the NSA had urged the United States to become a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was finally ratified in 1994. In 1997, sponsored by the

National Spiritual Assembly, a video, called “The Power of Race Unity,” was broadcast on the Black Entertainment Network and on other networks across America. The video characterizes the Bahá'í Faith as a “spiritual democracy.”

### Social and Economic Development

Economic solutions to global poverty require that economic values be predicated on spiritual values. In promoting economic justice and prosperity (what Alain Locke calls “economic democracy”), Bahá'í communities have launched more than 1,500 development projects worldwide, including more than 600 schools and seven radio stations broadcasting educational, health, and agricultural programs. Projects are tracked by the Bahá'í Office of Social and Economic Development, an agency of the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel. Published in December 2004, *In Service to the Common Good: The American Bahá'í Community's Commitment to Social Change* profiled, from among more than 400 Bahá'í-sponsored initiatives, a handful of projects in the fields of education, health care, race unity, community development, and women's rights. These projects include, among others: Health for Humanity, Tahirih Justice Center, Women for International Peace and Arbitration, Bahá'í Institute for Race Unity, Native American Bahá'í Institute, Children's Theater Company, and Parent University. In what Locke calls “cultural democracy,” one must not forget the various Bahá'í artists, American Indian dancers, Bahá'í-sponsored musical groups, ballets, and youth dance workshops that reinforce progressive social values.

### Advancement of Women

In “The Search for Values in an Age of Transition: A Statement of the Bahá'í International Community on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations” (October 2005), the BIC states that a healthy democracy must be founded on the principle of the equality of men and women. Member states of the United Nations, in their efforts to promote democracy, must vigilantly work for the inclusion of women

in all facets of governance as a practical necessity. These Bahá'í-sponsored initiatives represent, but do not exhaust, efforts by the worldwide Bahá'í community and its democratically elected institutions to promote social justice through social action.

—Christopher G. Buck

*See also* Democracy; Human Rights Watch; Religious Activism

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## BAKER, ELLA (1903–1986)

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Ella Josephine Baker, an African American civil rights and political activist, was influential in a broad range of 20th-century social justice movements for almost half a century. Baker is one of a group of significant, but not widely known, African American women who made crucial contributions to the civil rights movement. Her radical vision of social change emphasized grassroots organizing, commitment to listening to people, and then working together to address their problems and needs.

Baker, born in Norfolk, Virginia, was influenced by growing up in Norfolk and rural North Carolina as the granddaughter of former slaves. Family members, such as her grandfather, Mitchell Ross, a farmer and Baptist minister, and her mother, Georgianna Ross Baker, whose religious beliefs and sense of moral obligation spurred her to help the sick and others in need in the community, set examples that would influence Baker's activism for the eradication of poverty, racism, and other inequities. Baker was sent to the Shaw Academy and University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and graduated as class valedictorian in 1927.

Within a year, she moved to Harlem, where she encountered what she described as radical thinking and saw firsthand the terrible impact of the Great Depression on ordinary people's lives. She held jobs ranging from waitressing and factory labor to editorial and management work for the *American West Indian News* and the *Negro National News*. Through working at the Harlem Branch Library, helping organize speakers for the Adult Education committee, attending Brookwood Labor College (established to train labor organizers) in Katonah, New York, for a semester in 1931, Ella Baker became immersed in the radical political debates of the time.

Ella Baker worked on tenant and consumer rights with the Dunbar Housewives' League, as well as on a variety of community cooperative projects. Along with George Schuyler, in 1930 she helped organize and became executive director of the Young Negroes' Cooperative League, a black consumer cooperative formed to combat the economic effects of the Depression and to promote mutual aid, communalism, and community-based action. In the 1930s, Ella also taught consumer education through the Works Progress Administration. She was married to Thomas J. Roberts for several decades but kept her maiden name, and she raised her niece Jacqueline Brockington.

Ella Baker's organizing abilities and capacity to be an effective grassroots trainer were central to her work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the 1940s, she traveled in the South and throughout the country as a field secretary and helped recruit members, organized campaigns locally, and raised money as director of branches. She worked closely with people on everything from job training for African Americans to anti-lynching campaigns and thus created a network of individuals committed to social and economic change. This network would become an important source for the civil rights activities of the 1950s and 1960s. By 1952, Baker resigned from the NAACP in part to raise her niece but also because of her disaffection with the bureaucracy and the lack of a group-centered leadership. Baker returned to Harlem and was elected president of the New York City NAACP branch. By building coalitions, she organized campaigns on issues such as desegregation, school reform, and police brutality. Her involvement in coalition politics resulted in her unsuccessful run for elective office for the New York City Council on the Liberal Party ticket.

In 1956, Baker, along with Stanley Levison and Bayard Rustin (both men would become advisors to Martin Luther King, Jr.), founded In Friendship, an organization that raised funds to aid the growing civil rights struggle in the South, including the Montgomery Improvement Association, the coordinator of the Montgomery bus boycott. In 1957, Baker and Rustin went south to help organize the founding meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference