



of governmental action regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, staff in the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The briefing was an advocacy initiative to address the violence against women act (VAWA)1 Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), has also introduced by the U.S. Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994, VAWA became the first form of U.S. Services “to provide legislation representing a multidimensional approach to strengthening local, state, tribal, and federal responses to gender-based violence and violence against women and help put the LGBTQ+ communities, specifically relating to crimes associated with dating violence, domestic violence or intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The dual purpose of the bill is to “ensure victim safety and offender accountability” (Office of Violence Against Women Indigenous). Throughout the years, reauthorizations of VAWA since its reauthorization had expired that year, and therefore, was again up

(MMIWGT2S), the first-ever person and woman of color to hold a U.S. Cabinet position, Secretary of the Interior established a new Missing and Murdered Unit (MMU) within the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services “to provide leadership and direction for cross-departmental and interagency work involving missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives . . . [and] full weight of the federal government into investigating these cases and enforcement resources across agencies and throughout Indian country” (DOI News). On May 4, 2021, President Joe Biden proclaimed May 5 as the National Day of Missing and Murdered Peoples Awareness Day,

for reauthorization for the 2012 fiscal year. Along with three other women from diverse faith backgrounds, representing religious or interfaith domestic violence organizations and programs, I was invited by the NGO to participate on an Interfaith Domestic Violence Coalition panel for the press briefing. When I was introduced to speak, however, the last words of the introduction caught me off-guard: “. . . and she clearly falls is a victim of domestic violence.” Despite having jotted down talking points in advance, suddenly, I felt ill-prepared and out of place. An intense sensation of heat overpowered my being. There was no intention to present myself as the victim on display for the event; to be honest, I had never actually shared my abusive relationship history with the conveners. The emcee of the event, a white Christian clergywoman introduced as a “survivor” of domestic violence, shared the obstacles

“Thank you for inviting me to about this very important gan. “I want to clarify, do not self-identify as a The consistent frequency and of this gender-based “justice” ular was already too familiar. when considering the purpose of gathering and the title of the law, the Violence Against Women for example, the emphasis on the victimized body of women, regarding the accountability of the perpetrators of that violence. Having experienced all the predetermined of “Battered Woman Syndrome,” simultaneously self-diagnosing it occasion, is another reminder of such branding creates new, opportunities for those of us who endured abusive relationships to tematically beaten up and by ourselves and others—even symbolically—over and over

again. It she had faced due to a deficient, broken becomes a gendered burden to bear. In system. It was a story she chose to tell. attempting to identify the “disease,” we While there was likely no malintent still become “diseased,” pathologizing on the part of the sponsoring NGO, I our experiences of abuse. Despite the still could not help but feel exploited shared anecdotes of victimization and and tokenized as the poster “victim” trauma that may (or may not) have for the briefing. I never consented to been expected of me at the congressio- such a representation. My nobility nal hearing, I refused to go there. That refusal was a resistance to how I was instantly invisibilized, flanking in was the shadows of my “trauma.” Never- introduced, to how I was scripted to theless, there was no running away at perform. Ironically, being introduced as a victim took me completely “off-script” of my own pre-drafted words; yet, it also challenged me to create a commitment to protecting Native commu- nities through the reauthorization of VAWA new narrative for myself. (The White House).

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Simultaneously, I had been volun- intend to serve. While I shared my per- teering as a “Court Companion and spectives during the training sessions, I am not sure whether anyone was Victim Advocate” at the “Abused recep- Persons Program” (titles that remain), tive to them. One thing was for certain: the program and the court system an initiative of the county health de- only viewed us as “victims.” partment where I lived at the time. In such systems, we are Volunteering for the program was a inherently victims—before we even arrive, self-prescribed attempt to heal from grant- leaving an abusive relationship (which ing us the latitude to perform victim-

many, I recognize, are not privileged to do, due to varying circumstances) by hoping to support others who had also experienced domestic or intimate partner violence. Among the program staff and our cohort of volunteers, I was the only one who had openly verbalized experiencing an abusive relationship, revealing a close-up understanding of how “justice” falls short. While I sensed a genuine collective desire to help those victimized by abuse, the program lacked sufficient, relevant educational and economic resources, and most importantly, it lacked any colonial epistemic experience—or what Deer refers to as “the kind of knowledge we gain from experiencing something; a visceral knowledge that can invoke the physical senses and the genius of memory” (14)—from its targeted population, thus neglecting the insightful, vital contributions that could be shared with the program. The dichotomies of “victim” and “offender” used in the space are dehumanizing and diminish the possibility of any inherent nobility. Therefore, despite their good

hood; and then, there are those ten codes deciphering who deserves protection, who deserves the abuse, who deserves or should be “saved,” and who should be rescuing or saving; this savior extends across many interesting dimensions and planes (Cole). Becoming a “battered woman” not only from a historical, patriarchal narrative script. Its imprint deepens it becomes economized, ethnicized, geographized, Indigenized, and/or racialized, and so on, particularly examined through the lens of histories—justifying, reproducing diverse forms of against Indigenous, Black, ethnic/racial, and gendered bodies (for example, see Deer; Hammad; Hartman; Ritchie; Sharpe). This oftentimes internalized, especially already marginalized and underrepresented communities. Ultimately, if oppression persists “long enough and effectively enough, you [may] begin to do it to yourself . . . becom[ing] a laborator” (Baldwin and Giovanni 17).

intentions, the program staff's efforts  
relationship  
seemed paternalistic and surface-level  
at most, disregarding the diverse so-  
psychological-  
ciocultural contexts of the people they  
me.

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For five years, I was in a  
with a man who was economically,  
emotionally, physically,  
ly, and spiritually abusive towards  
me.

My former partner's abuse was fueled  
view . . .  
by evident preexisting insecurities that  
"per-  
swiftly avalanched from the "intel" he  
companionate  
collected during his frequent violations  
of my privacy, including reading my  
memoir  
journal entries about my interrogations  
Dusk  
of uninvited advances from men and the  
details of a gang rape I had endured just  
that  
a year prior to meeting him. His mother  
. . .  
had tragically passed away from ad-  
onto  
vanced ovarian cancer during the early  
gazing, it's  
weeks of our courtship. Coincidentally,  
histori-  
I was diagnosed with an early stage of  
own  
ovarian cancer two weeks following  
and  
her earthly departure. Oddly enough,  
example of  
I assumed my cancer diagnosis would  
reference  
serve as a form of protection or shield  
Cancer  
from the abuse, perhaps an unyielding  
but rather  
bond between us; but instead, it swiftly  
equipment"  
became irrelevant, invisible. Our rela-  
the time

a silent corner, hidden from  
until dear, beloved souls gave me  
mission" to share it. The  
words of Saidiya Hartman on being  
influenced by DuBois's use of  
in *The Souls of Black Folk* and  
of Dawn—inspired by Chandler and  
Spivak's terminology—confirmed  
this "autobiographical example .  
is not a personal story that folds  
itself; it's not about navel  
really about trying to look at  
cal and social process and one's  
formation as a window onto social  
historical processes, as an  
them" (Saunders 5). Lorde's  
to her personal story in *The  
Journals* as "not academic,"  
as "a piece of life-saving  
that "kept [her] alive during

tionship ended in 2009, and two years  
 al. 11),  
 later—two months after that congress-  
 reconcile  
 sional press briefing—I was formally  
 share  
 diagnosed with having post-traumatic  
 now is  
 stress disorder (PTSD). Two years lat-  
 manifested as  
 er, we attempted to give the relationship  
 a rupture I needed to address. And  
 in  
 another try, but it had already failed the  
 the words of Lorde, “now it’s  
 out there,  
 first time. The relationship was an ac-  
 the umbilical cord is cut, it has  
 a life of  
 celerant to a lingering disbelief in my  
 its own” (2). It is no longer  
 “mine,” nor  
 own nobility. All of my relationships—  
 does it belong to me.  
 regardless of shape or form—were  
 Silence formerly functioned  
 as a  
 mirrors of a distorted reality, reflecting  
 protective armor—for my own  
 guilt  
 the neglect of my spiritual self.  
 and shame and for my former  
 partner,  
 To be truthful, it has taken me well  
 from the backbiting, verbal abuse,  
 over a decade to share this personal  
 and judgments projected from  
 others  
 experience openly and publicly. Obvi-  
 in their attempts to slander his  
 char-  
 acter. In addition to unlearning  
 ously, I am not the first to share such  
 sociocultural norms and other  
 unjust  
 forms  
 an account; nor will I be the last, un-  
 of socialization (we do not often  
 fortunately. Initially resistant to being  
 ly speak about “these kinds of  
 free-  
 the center of attention, to be centered  
 ly speak about “these kinds of  
 issues”  
 at all, this story was safeguarded in  
 in Azeri/Iranian/Persian  
 households),  
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 gossip and backbiting, unfortunately,  
 for justice and healing they  
 evoke.  
 had already emerged among a number  
 Even those secret  
 well-intentioned  
 of those privy to this particular slice of “intervention” plans among a

few clusters of friends deeply rooted in my life. Even in the deafening secrets and silence, I heard people talking. justice activism, which I learned of years later, backfired in Aside from the desire to avoid being unhealthy, toxic modes, even dissolving “exposed” to and judged by the world, I friendships. All I desired was to avoid being had no interest in presenting the self-in- (mis) represented or replicating flicted image of damaged “victim” or the “danger in damage-centered recovering “survivor.” Both “victim” [narratives] . . . [as a] pathologizing approach in and “survivor” still give way/weight to which the oppression singularly defines a the experience of trauma, albeit differently.2 The thought of others projecting women munity” (Tuck 413), such as such a negative status upon me felt in violent relationships. Tuck suggests disempowering. In the same instance, considering desire-based frameworks instead. there was no desire on my part to trivialize or delegitimize the injustice or My desire to seek liberation from the entanglements and fetters of diminish the urgency of domestic/intimate partner/gender-based violence. age and victimhood is neither unique nor limited to my personal experiences with intimate partner, domestic, Similarly, I did not wish to undermine the genuine empathy and aspirations gen- der-based, and sexual violence. There are extensive systems and structures in our societies where a duality of visible and invisible trauma and domestic violence. Like “victim,” there- is reproduced and invisibilized nobility is reproduced and fore, I believe “survivor,” as a construct, is reproduced and normalized, particularly in the realm of justice. particu- larly in the realm of justice. still anchors an individual’s trauma or pain Many have

and centers the damage or scars there—created—through comedy and humor, from, limiting it to the human body—not writing, research, the arts, and social the capacities of the soul—therefore, emotion—humanizing narratives that phasizing the scars that remain from such experiences, not the healing, growth, and push back against one-sided or dominant progress. Thus, instead of transcending our (for example, see @regcharging pain and suffering—accepting it happened, (Charging); Bida; Dougher; Madden; Noah; Rodri- in limbo within a projected and/or internal- guez). Like Tuck, “I invite you to join me in re-visioning ized, one-dimensional posture of survivor [representations] in our communities not only of our own individual and collective making. There is no desire on my part to deny the need to document the effects of oppression on our communities of oppression on our communities but also to consider the long-term claim it; it is solely a personal preference of thinking of ourselves as repercussions not to be perceived as a survivor or survivor- of thinking of ourselves as broken” ing. Living is also an option.

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(409)—moving beyond satisfaction it? What examples in the world could I learn and draw from? How can we with representations of desire—moving along to recognition of and belief authentically and humbly engage in in our inherent spiritual reality—visibilizing nobility for ourselves and our es of society to “assail” the injustices and inequities of this world, while communities, especially in numerous and inequities of this world, while discourses about (in)justice and (in)equity concurrently amplifying the spiritual reality—the nobility (and therefore, reality—the nobility (and of renewal and reimagination, this visioning—constructive resiliency) of the soul?

visibilizing of nobility demands that we evolved  
 look at members of our human family who endure injustices and inequities—  
 First, how can in varying degrees—with new eyes.  
 in They are not merely damaged bodies and  
 or spiritually disembodied beings, as and  
 too frequently depicted, but so much entangled  
 more. They are souls, embodiments of inequity,  
 nobility or noble-embodied beings. spaces  
 (and their convergences)? Second, how  
 R R , do exemplary narratives of constructive  
 V J /N resilience help us honor and recognize  
 the nobility of peoples and communi-  
 My soul simultaneously aches and deny-  
 smiles whenever I ponder the Bahá'í  
 oppression that perspective on the relationship be-  
 These exist and persist in the world?  
 tween our inherent nobility and justice: questions, I imagine, are only a few  
 of  
 “Justice is a noble quality and injus- those I will live with all the  
 days of my life, on this earthly plane,  
 tice an iniquity” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris attempting to  
 Talks 79), particularly due to the hor- humbly explore and learn from.  
 rific accumulation of dehumanization It is my belief that  
 visibilizing the inherent nobility of human souls is  
 we are currently enduring. Learning a key ingredient in the possibility  
 this, however, has also forced me to  
 of reimagining resistance as  
 question how, for decades, I could con- constructive  
 ceive of the inherent spiritual nobility resilience. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá  
 writes:  
 of others and their justice while deny-  
 ing my own. But if “[j]ustice is a no- In the world of existence there  
 ble quality,” what is true nobility, and is nothing so important as  
 spirit,

what role(s) does it play in response to of oppression, (in)justice, and (in)equity? What does nobility look like in the face of oppression, and would I recognize virtues

nothing so essential as the spirit of man. The spirit of man is the most noble of phenomena . . . the collective center of all human

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. . . the cause of the illumination of this world. (Promulgation 239–40)

and hypervisibility of injustice and inequity on a number of intersecting levels. The global COVID-19 pandem-

ic, combined with a rampant, height-

Imagine if we all saw one another of

ened response to worldly injustices

through this lens: as spirits, as nuclei an-

anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity,

of human virtues, as radiant lights—poverty

ti-Asian violence, extremes of

even amidst pain and suffering. When xeno-

and wealth, vaccine apartheid,

reflecting on this imagery, I cannot the

phobia, racism, and patriarchy, and

help but reflect on the analogies de-persistence

list goes on—despite their

scribed by the Central Figures of the characterized

for centuries—have been

Bahá'í Faith regarding the entangled action. Most

by varying calls for public

relationship between the most globally oppressed communities—as the “pupil collective

of these movements have been motivated by the necessities of

of the eye,”—a metaphor distinctly infueled

justice, while others have been

troduced by Bahá'u'lláh for people of liberties.

by demands for individual

African descent—as portals of light, synon-

Mass public outcry is usually

and Indigenous peoples as beacons of light who will become “so illumined as such as

ymous with or derived from—but not limited to—terms and concepts

to enlighten the whole world” (Tablets pro-

activism, boycott, demonstration,

of the Divine Plan 32). This spiritual movements,

test, resistance, and social

reality cannot be reduced to coinci-scholars

for example. The most prolific

dence. What if narratives of injustice

of “social movement studies,”

par- and inequity faced by communities residing were paralleled by these noble qualities they possess? How might a nobility framework yield new opportunities definitions of for reimagining noble souls and their character- capacities of constructive thought and oppositionality. action in the face of injustice? While most I fully advocate the necessity of un- earthing and studying all facets of oppression, stopping at the paralysis of damage or victimhood from such oppression seems incomplete, falling short, and even a missed opportunity. social Why not, rather, prepare and seek out and pathways of transcendence through especially that oppression? the persistent efforts of those catego- Today, more than ever, we are im- “marginalized” mersed in a cumulative amplification and so on.

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Such criteria visibilize negative imag- differ- ery of collective action, while invisibilizing the inherent nobility of individuals and communities engaged in such in action and their pursuit of justice and Justice equity. The intensity of discourses and of actions revolving around racial injustice- spiritual ances- ticularly those educated and within a factory-like white, Euro-American system of formal higher education, limit their collective action to criteria istic of contention and These conditions are clearly the most mediatized and popularized, but are also more humanizing elements of social change that are almost always hidden from view. While the study of social movements is important, these criteria limit the possibilities of change and the inherent capacities contributions of humankind, rized and segmented as “oppressed,” “underserved,” disadvantage, dysfunction, and ence (80). In a message to Bahá'í denied access to higher education Iran, the Universal House of addressed the historical oppression their Bábí and Bahá'í

tice, anti-Indigeneity, and anti-Black-complementary  
 ness in the United States and globally  
 resil-  
 reveals that this trend in visibilizing  
 be-  
 suffering while invisibilizing nobility  
 too,  
 is nothing new. However, the case for  
 and,  
 naming and centering inherent nobility  
 principles,  
 is a novel, Bahá'í-inspired perspective.  
 against  
 In the process of spiritually excavat-  
 ing my inherent nobility, I was pulled  
 also  
 by the arts and scholarship that would  
 Afri-  
 help me on this journey. In my re-  
 as  
 search, I encountered many artistic and  
 and  
 scholarly critiques of the hypervisibili-  
 com-  
 ty of communities and peoples' trauma  
 the recent  
 and victimhood, as well as arguments  
 obsta-  
 justifying the necessity to underscore  
 resil-  
 and center their suffering. There were  
 utilization of  
 also works that visibilize the nobility  
 qualities  
 of communities that endure injustice  
 oppression,  
 and how they constructively respond  
 the  
 to systematic oppression. Represent-  
 obstacles]  
 tations that piqued my attention were  
 them-  
 those uniquely captured moments that  
 through  
 humanize and celebrate individual and  
 so-

tors, as well as their  
 inheritance of a constructively  
 ient spiritual capacity to advance  
 yond that same oppression: "You,  
 demonstrate such noble qualities  
 holding fast to these same  
 you belie the slander purveyed  
 your Faith" (9 Sept. 2007).  
 The Universal House of Justice  
 notes the centuries-long lives of  
 can Americans in the United States  
 evidence of constructive resilience  
 calls upon the African American  
 munity to continue "to see in  
 turmoil opportunity rather than  
 cle" (4 Feb. 2018). Constructive  
 ience, therefore, requires  
 the spiritually inherent noble  
 of souls to "transcend"  
 perceive what is possible "beyond  
 distress of difficulties [and  
 assailing them," and transform  
 selves and their communities  
 deeds that advance "spiritual and

collective joy, self-care, and preservation in the midst of suffering just as much as they shed light on anger, grief, and pain. They highlight the constructive resilience of communities popularly portrayed on a default setting of “broken,” disrobed of our nobility and emerging costumed in descriptors of deficiency or what Walter (2016) calls the “five ‘Ds’ of data”: disparity, deprivation, physical

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resilience. Furthermore, constructive resilience is by no means restricted to the Bahá’í community; nor is there a singular method or understanding in which which constructive resilience can be achieved (Karlberg). Sumud (?????), an Arabic concept place” (49) and meaning steadfastness and “resilient where- resistance,” can be traced back to the tenth century. Palestinian women use sumud as an explanation of their daily existence and collective empowerment, constructing particularly through a reaffirmation of ‘prefigurative’ social their identity, a “preservation” of resistance”

cial development.” The beauty of constructive resilience is its an internal power of the spirit of ples and their communities. It also passes the quantitative frontiers silience” that have been social actions and discourses across social media spaces, that #StillHere is commonly (mis) interpreted and limited to a of Lakota women, men, and children Wounded Knee in 1890 (Brings Plenty). Sørensen maps tance, referring to “initiatives people start to build the society desire independently of the structures already in lies on Vinthagen’s definition, by constructive resistance is to “transcend the whole of being-against-something, turning into the proactive form of ‘alternative’ or institutions which facilitate

estinian culture, and a “nurturance” (7). These are only but a few  
 concep- tual and theoretical frameworks  
 of the Palestinian community (Ryan). tual and theoretical frameworks  
 that, like constructive resilience,  
 holt explains how Rezilience (a com- like constructive resilience,  
 visibilize nobility, the highest aspirations  
 bination of the slang term for reserva- nobility, the highest aspirations  
 of in- dividuals and communities  
 tion, “rez,” and resilience), an Indige- dividuals and communities  
 facing op- pression in its various forms.  
 nous worldview, is an active teaching The Universal House of Justice,  
 and learning practice for Indigenous in  
 in communities to “reclaim, relearn, and another message, praises the  
 Iranian Bahá’í community’s  
 reconnect with their ancestral ways of Bahá’í community’s  
 establishment of the Bahá’í Institute for  
 being” (72). Rezilience is an example the Bahá’í Institute for  
 Higher Education (BIHE) in response to the  
 of Vizenor’s reference to Indigenous (BIHE) in response to the  
 government’s systematic denial of higher  
 survivance (Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*; education to  
 education to all its Bahá’í citizenry as  
 Vizenor, *Survivance*; Vizenor and Lee), representative  
 representative of “actions [that] are not  
 a “moving beyond [Indigenous] basic confined to ef-  
 confined to ef- forts to seek justice” (1 Oct.  
 survival in the face of overwhelming 2014). Fur-  
 2014). Fur- thermore, the establishment of the  
 cultural genocide to create spaces of BIHE  
 BIHE as an “unrelenting pursuit of  
 synthesis and renewal” (Vizenor, *Man- knowledge  
 knowledge is perhaps one of the most  
 ifest Manners 53). Survivance echoes outstanding  
 outstanding examples of constructive resilience  
 the sacredness of the Lakota word tak- the modern age.” Alternative  
 in peaceful  
 ini, which is often simply translated to peaceful measures to sustain teaching and  
 peaceful survivor, but it means “to come back to learn-  
 survivor, but it means “to come back to learning within formal higher  
 learn- education have  
 life.” Takini, is about restoring Indige- nously communities and moving beyond  
 education have similarly been implemented through  
 nous communities and moving beyond “street academies” in Turkey  
 survival, recalling stories of the ances- (Aktas et  
 (Aktas et al.), underground universities in  
 tors and the historical trauma inherited, al.), underground universities in*

Kosovo

most associated with the U.S. Army's Seventh Calvary massacre of hundreds of programs

(Sommers and Buckland) and Poland (Garlinski), and educational

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held in private homes, religious institutions, and offices for students in Palestine (Zelkovitz).  
nobil-

computer screens, my therapist

ty." Mind. Blown. Her instructions were

me homework: "Recite a prayer

V N so simple, yet profoundly humbling.

M Pray for my own nobility?!? Is that

actually a thing? Prayers for the ances-

While understanding the constructive difficulties,

tors, detachment, tests and

capacity of the soul outside of my-

healing, steadfastness,

(in)justice, love,

self, the struggle to see it within me and

praise of the Creator, my mother

and

was still very real. After completing

father, my brother, my profession

...

a remote session with my psychotherapist, the fog gradually began to clear  
Never had

were among the primary motivations for prostration and devotion.

for me. Several years had passed since alone

praying for my own nobility (let

my PTSD diagnosis, while trudging to

recognizing it) been on my mind up

along an evolving journey of disengagement, I

that point. Ever since that

tanglement from its fetters. All this Hidden

recite the following from The

time, justice and equity had served as part of

Words of Bahá'u'lláh daily

as dual interlocking aspirations driving my activism, teaching, research,

my morning meditation routine:

and writing, but my attempted efforts were constantly falling short. Even my

O Son of Spirit!

thou

I created thee rich, why dost

determination to highlight narratives about the constructive, transformative

bring thyself down to poverty?

capacities of "marginalized" and "op-

Noble I made thee, wherewith

Out of the

dost thou abase thyself?

pressed" peoples and communities

essence of knowledge I gave

thee  
 seemed rather oxymoronic. Externally, I was wholeheartedly committed to exposing (in)justice and the nobility among the hearts, minds, and souls of “the oppressed” (and the oppressors), unto  
 but it was in competition with the internal invisibilization of my own nobility, powerful as well as a forgetfulness in the pursuit of justice for myself. Clearly, this sudden pull to visibilize nobility was new and uncomfortable, especially when related to my own thou being. Just before our first session had concluded, and with more than thirteen thousand kilometers between our  
 When We In/visibilize Our Nobility . . .  
 Reciting these sacred words and absorbing their meaning is equivalent to advanced looking into a new, undistorted mirror that still requires daily meditation and into a application of my interpretation of (13). those words into action in every phase of of my life. In other words, I am still and working on truly seeing the nobility and justice of my soul. Challenging the historically situated Northwestern Hemispheric concept humans and identity of nobility (Leonhard then and Wieland), this spiritual dimension the  
 being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight thyself, that thou mayest find standing within thee, mighty, erful and self-subsisting. (#13, From the Arabic)  
 O Son of Spirit!  
 Noble have I created thee, yet hast abased thyself. Rise then that for which thou wast  
 (#22, From the Arabic)  
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 with a tradition of African thought that was significantly by Du Bois and that attempted to chemize a history of oppression source of pride and inspiration”  
 If the material or physical frame our bodies and the damage, harm, trauma inflicted upon them become our primary point of focus, then we reproduce the same gaze that justifies oppression—a perception that are reduced to soulless bodies. We lose sight of the core reality of

of nobility—not unique to the Bahá’í identity of our souls and their capacities of inherent nobility to withstand oppression and to do so powerfully and constructively.

age, but also foreshadows the future of humankind and its inherent capacities to heal, transcend oppression, and advance intergenerationally. “A striking aspect of Bahá’í belief,” Arbuckle calls for ab purports, “is the extraordinary optimism it displays about humanity’s not misfuture. Such hopefulness would be undehumanize, untenable were it not for a profound conviction, which arises from the Faith’s realities of teachings, that the human being was inequity in this world—nor to essentialize or homogenize those social realities. Nor futuristic, intergenerational response to visibility, oppression that is associated with our us—to spiritual afterlives. consider one that is whole—one that captures both the corporeal and spiritual reality of humankind.

“centering the ‘pupil of the eye’” also al reality of humankind. For instance, “[i]dentify[ing] the achievement and exhilaration in [B]lack life is not defiance of an unceasing racial oppression endured for well over five centuries. According to Smith, “interpretations of the ‘pupil of the eye’ metaphor and an invitation to not only

O N S A  
F

possibly

that fix upon the spiritual perceptive-  
beauty  
ness of [B]lack people are in keeping  
relevant

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letter addressed to the U.S. Bahá'í  
favorite  
community regarding intensifying ra-  
Lorde—

cial injustices, the National Spiritual  
us most  
Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United  
is the

States wrote: “The language we use  
strength” (60)—

and the attitudes we take, while not ig-  
spiritu-  
noring the harsh realities that exist in  
in “no-

the world, should appeal to the nobler  
naked. We

aspirations of our fellow-citizens” (25  
destined to be

Feb. 2017). Accordingly, this is not an  
in glory

attempt to deny or delegitimize trauma,  
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Se-

injustice, and inequity and their multi-  
noble,

tudinous effects on peoples and groups,  
would

but to celebrate and center fellow souls  
our

that are created to endure and move  
birth,

through and break free of the cages of  
af-

such suffering.

nobility

May this be an invitation to all of  
trans-

us—especially to all the souls whose  
bodies have been and continue to

feel or be treated as branded, broken,  
damaged, erased, inferior, invisible,

feel Black “pain but also the

of being human” (Perry). In a

me along the way. One of my

guided meditations of Audre

“[T]hat visibility which makes

vulnerable is that which also

source of our greatest

comforts and assures me of the

al implications of being clothed

bility,” even when feeling

are, after all, spiritually

“dressed in royal robes, to walk

for ever and ever”

lections 317). We all are created

and nobility looks divine on us,

you not agree? From the point of

conception—before our physical

and beyond—through our spiritual

terlives/futures, our inherent

continues to insist, persist, and

form into a new garment:

O Thou Provider, O Thou Forgiv-  
er! A noble soul hath ascended

and/or—as non-human, as well as and those souls who, through their words, thoughts, or deeds, choose to read, see, everlasting and engage with souls as damaged, re- non-human, and ignoble—to visibil- attire this lize nobility. Please join me in this ever-evolving journey to consider why and how visibilizing nobility helps us reimagine resistance as constructive resilience, to realize and celebrate admitted our individual and collective inherent mysteries nobility, and to actualize our spiritual reality in our afterlives and our futures. splen- It is my hope that these closing words and this invitation do not at all art suggest that I have forgotten my vul- nerability in feeling exposed. Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá, revolutionary spiritual ancestors have been holding my hand, accompanying When We In/visibilize Our Nobility . . .	unto the Kingdom of reality,  hastened from the mortal world of dust to the realm of  glory. Exalt the station of this  cently arrived guest, and  long-standing servant with a new and wondrous robe. O Thou Peerless Lord! Grant Thy forgiveness and tender care so that this soul may be  into the retreats of Thy  and may become an intimate com- panion in the assemblage of  dours. Thou art the Giver, the Be- stower, the Ever-Loving. Thou  the Pardoner, the Tender, the  Powerful. (#11, Prayers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)
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Although far from completing the work of visibilizing nobility, what keeps me going is knowing we were created noble, and our nobility never dies . . .

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