

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 and the rights of Indigenous people and women of color to hold a U.S. Cabinet position, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), has also introduced by the U.S. Congress 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] help put the full weight of the federal government into investigating these cases and enforcing 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 Indigenous Peoples Awareness Day, including his

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since its reauthorization had expired this point. It was my turn to approach the microphone and share my story.

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; commitment to protecting Native commu- yet, it also challenged me to create a 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 hood; and then, there are those unwrit-

do, due to varying circumstances) by ten codes deciphering who deserves

hoping to support others who had also protection, who deserves the abuse,

experienced domestic or intimate part- who deserves or should be

“rescued” or “saved,” and who should be

ner violence. Among the program staff doing the

and our cohort of volunteers, I was the rescuing or saving; this savior

complex

only one who had openly verbalized extends across many interesting di-

experiencing an abusive relationship, mensions and planes (Cole). Becoming

revealing a close-up understanding a “battered woman” not only

emerges

of how “justice” falls short. While I from a historical, patriarchal

norma-

sensed a genuine collective desire to tive script. Its imprint deepens

when

help those victimized by abuse, the it becomes economized, ethnicized,

program lacked sufficient, relevant geographized, Indigenized, and/or

ra-

educational and economic resources, cialized, and so on, particularly

when

and most importantly, it lacked any examined through the lens of

colonial

epistemic experience—or what Deer histories—justifying,

normalizing, and

refers to as “the kind of knowledge reproducing diverse forms of

violence

we gain from experiencing something; against Indigenous, Black, ethnic/

a visceral knowledge that can invoke racial, and gendered bodies (for ex-

the physical senses and the genius of ample, see Deer; Hammad; Hartman;

memory” (14)—from its targeted pop- Ritchie; Sharpe). This

victimhood is

ulation, thus neglecting the insightful, oftentimes internalized, especially

for

vital contributions that could be shared already marginalized and underrepre-

with the program. The dichotomies sented communities. Ultimately, if

the

of “victim” and “offender” used in oppression persists “long

enough and

the space are dehumanizing and di- effectively enough, you [may] begin

to

diminish the possibility of any inherent do it to yourself . . . becom[ing] a

col-

nobility. Therefore, despite their good 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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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

For five years, I was in a
with a man who was economically,
emotionally, physically,
ly, and spiritually abusive towards
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, em- action—humanizing narratives that phasizing the scars that remain from such experiences, not the healing, growth, and push back against one-sided or domi- progress. Thus, instead of transcending our (for ex- pain and suffering—accepting it happened, ample, see @regcharging (Charging); grieving it, and so on—we become stuck 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 to of our own individual and collective mak- recognize the need to document the effects of op- ing. There is no desire on my part to deny the name “survivor” for those who wish to pression on our communities but also to consider the long-term claim it; it is solely a personal preference repercussions of thinking of ourselves as not to be perceived as a survivor or surviv- 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—mov- authentically and humbly engage in ing along to recognition of and belief social action and the relevant in our inherent spiritual reality—visi- discourses- bilizing nobility for ourselves and our es of society to “assail” the injustices and inequities of this world, while communities, especially in numerous concurrently amplifying the discourses about (in)justice and (in)eq- spiritual uity. Most importantly, in this journey reality—the nobility (and therefore, constructive resiliency) of the of renewal and reimagination, this vis- 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 unearthing 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 pathways of transcendence through especially that oppression? Today, more than ever, we are im- “marginalized” mersed in a cumulative amplification and so on.

particularly 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, the persistent efforts of those rized and segmented as “oppressed,” “underserved,”

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Such criteria visibilize negative imagery of collective action, while invisibilizing the inherent nobility of individuals and communities engaged in such action and their pursuit of justice and equity. The intensity of discourses and actions revolving around racial injustice- spiritual ances- disadvantage, dysfunction, and ence (80). In a message to Bahá'í denied access to higher education Iran, the Universal House of Justice 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 measures to sustain teaching and
 ini, which is often simply translated to peaceful
 peaceful survivor, but it means “to come back to learn-
 survivor, but it means “to come back to learn-
 life.” Takini, is about restoring Indige- ing within formal higher
 education have
 education have
 nous communities and moving beyond similarly been implemented through
 survival, recalling stories of the ances- “street academies” in Turkey
 (Aktas et al.), underground universities in
 (Aktas et 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 every

computer screens, my therapist

tine (Zelkovitz).

morning to recognize your own

nobili-

ty." Mind. Blown. Her instructions were

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
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 Reciting these sacred words and absorbing their meaning is equivalent to advanced looking into a new, undistorted mirror that still requires daily meditation and 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 capac- ities of inherent nobility to teachings alone, not only reveals the withstand ities of inherent nobility to power of our spiritual ancestral lin- oppression and to do so-constructively.

age, but also foreshadows the future of humankind and its inherent capac- O N S A ities to heal, transcend oppression, F and advance intergenerationally. “A striking aspect of Bahá’í belief,” Arb- It is my sincerest hope that calling for the visibility of nobility (and ab purports, “is the extraordinary op- its inher- ent relationship to the soul) is its inher- ent relationship to the soul) is not mis- taken for a desire to avoid, future. Such hopefulness would be un- dehumanize, taken for a desire to avoid, tenable were it not for a profound con- erase, invisibilize, silence, minimize, or disconnect the social viction, which arises from the Faith’s or disconnect the social realities of bodies or trauma, injustice, and teachings, that the human being was bodies or trauma, injustice, and inequi- ty in this world—nor to created noble” (175–76). Constructive essentialize or homogenize those social realities. resilience, therefore, is a sustainable, Nor am I advocating for a partial futuristic, intergenerational response to visibility, but rather, inviting you—all of oppression that is associated with our us—to consider one that is whole—one spiritual afterlives. that captures both the corporeal and that captures both the corporeal and Similarly, Smith’s argument for spiritu- al reality of humankind. “centering the ‘pupil of the eye’” also al reality of humankind. For instance, “[i]dentify[ing] the achievement exemplifies a noble spiritual station in and exhilaration in [B]lack life is not defiance of an unceasing racial oppres- to mute or minimize racism . . . there sion endured for well over five centu- is a spiritual majesty of joy in ries. According to Smith, “interpreta- suffering” and an invitation to not only tions of the ‘pupil of the eye’ metaphor

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 visibilize 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- | 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) |
|--|---|

Although far from completing the work of visibilizing nobility, what keeps me going is knowing we were created noble, and our nobility never dies . . .

W C

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