

DISCOURSE IN ACTION

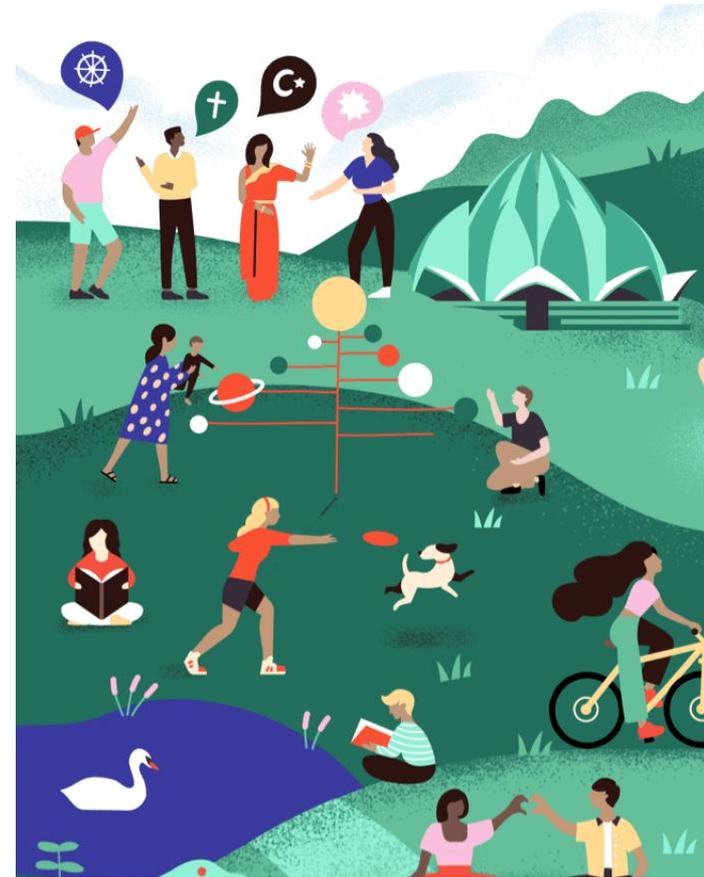
The First Fruits of the Wilmette
Institute Social Transformation
Certificate

*Emily Chou
Susan Wolfe
Geri Lynn Peak*



THE WILMETTE INSTITUTE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION CERTIFICATE IS...

- An online educational institution providing university and extension courses dedicated to the building of a new society through transformative education that questions underlying assumptions, addresses root causes, and combines theory and praxis.
- Our educational endeavors aim to inspire a commitment to social transformation drawing upon a Bahá'í conceptual framework in the areas of community building, social action and contributing to prevalent discourses utilizing study, consultation, action, and reflection.
- WI's interdisciplinary educational initiatives aim to raise the capacity of participants from diverse populations to become protagonists of social transformation in their realities.





1

Courses

2

Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact

Nonviolent social change - history, theory, practice
How to become effective protagonists of social change

Human Prosperity and Sustainable Development

Theoretical underpinnings, spiritual, material frameworks on local and global applications of sustainability.
Examine interplay between spiritual and material dimensions of sustainability

Reconstructing Blackness: Anti-Racism and Unity in the US

Examination of how individual transformation to an anti-racist society requires reconstructing race and Blackness in the U.S. Most significant manifestations of racism, root causes, Bahá'í Perspective

Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being

Academic and experiential appreciation of the centrality of education in building a prosperous society.
Nobility based approach to students

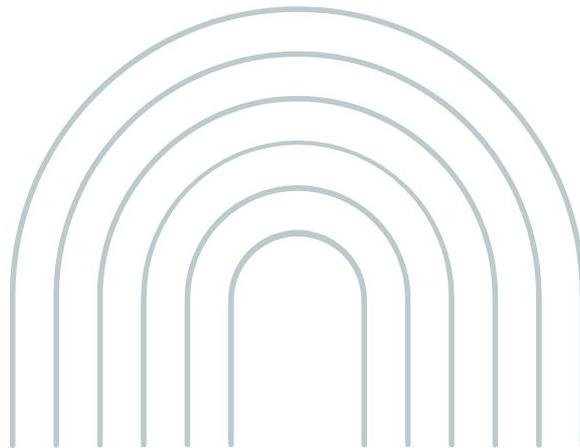


3

4

CURRENT FACULTY

- Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega, PhD, Adjunct Assistant Professor
- Ymasumac Marañón Davis, PhD Candidate, Educational Consultant
- Chitra Golestani, PhD, Associate Director
- Justin Scoggin, PhD, Chief Academic Officer



Participant Testimonial



Elga Agbaw Testimonial | WI Social Transformation Certificate Program

Share

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Elga Agbaw - F

Elga Agbaw
Transforming Education:
Knowing, Learning, and Being
(Certificate Student - Spring 2024)

that is not just on
intellectual levels

Watch on  YouTube

The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the channel name 'Elga Agbaw Testimonial | WI Social Transformation Certificate Program' and a 'Share' button. The video title is 'SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM'. The video thumbnail shows a woman, Elga Agbaw, speaking. Below the video is a profile picture of Elga Agbaw and her name, followed by her title 'Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being (Certificate Student - Spring 2024)'. Below that is a quote: 'that is not just on intellectual levels'. At the bottom left is a 'Watch on YouTube' button.



EMILY CHOU, M.A. LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

For the past decade, Emily has taught children and adults from all walks of life, including refugee and immigrant populations, church Sunday school children, and public school students. She earned her Master's in education and now teaches at a public elementary school. As a home front pioneer outside of Los Angeles, she worked towards equitable spiritual and material education. Her goals are to study and advance literacy, especially among populations learning English, and work to provide equitable education for her new community in Las Vegas, Nevada.



SUSAN WOLFE, PH.D. GRAND PRAIRIE, TEXAS

Susan is a Community Consultant who provides nonprofits, government, education, and healthcare organizations throughout the U.S. services for evaluation, strategic planning, and coalition development. Her main interest is in working to reduce health and educational inequities using participatory and inclusive methods. She has a Master of Arts in Community Psychology from Michigan State University and a PhD in Human Development from the University of Texas at Dallas, and recently earned her Certificate of Completion from the Social Transformation Certificate Program at the Wilmette Institute.



GERI LYNN PEAK, DR.P.H. BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Geri is a committed spiritual warrior for love and justice, striving to bring humility, service, diligence, wisdom and discernment to clients, collaborators and community. As an evaluation scholar practitioner she aligns spiritual principles with action that informs just technologies for learning and advancement, illuminating Bahá'u'lláh's prescription for transforming social reality. This August she marks her 50th year as a Bahá'í.

A fiber-artist, jewelry designer, poet, dancer, drummer and avid organic vegetable gardener, this native of Los Angeles resides in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S. with her husband, grown twin daughters, too many cats and a diverse garden of sovereign food and is blessed to have her 92 year old mama living independently nearby.





how the

Wilmette Institute Social Transformation Certificate

has transformed me and my community, both

individually

&

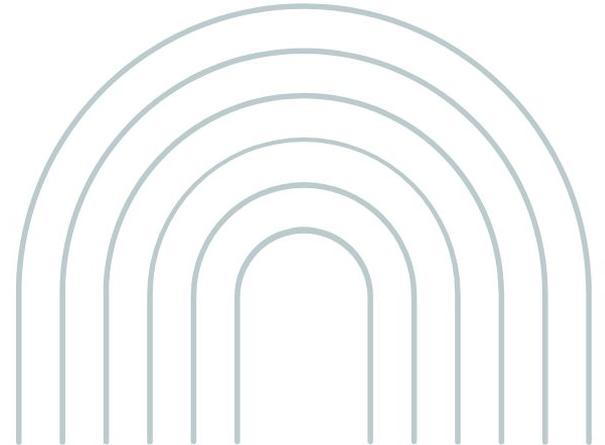
collectively



CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMS

The Bahá'í teachings, resonant with Gandhian philosophy, suggest that the most effective way to pursue social transformation is through constructive agency— by consciously, intentionally, and systematically building a new social order amidst the violence and oppression of the prevailing order. This Bahá'í commitment does not entail criticism of others who employ consciously conflictual methods in the pursuit of justice. Rather, Bahá'ís have faith that their purely constructive programme will, over time, make a vital contribution to the transformation of society alongside other movements struggling for justice in their own ways.

-Karlberg and Smith, Responding to Injustice with Constructive Agency, p. 4



PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION



01.

LIMITED UNDERSTANDING

Meaningful readings, podcasts, videos, articles, both Baha'i and non-Baha'i



CAPACITY TO ANALYZE OUTSIDE SOURCES IN LIGHT OF THE REVELATION

Deepening understanding of concepts to contribute to discourse

02.

PARTICIPANT

Active in community-building but passive in other spaces



ACTIVE CONTRIBUTOR

Developing constructive programs based on needs of my reality

03.

COMPARTMENTALIZED

Separating work, service, schooling, family



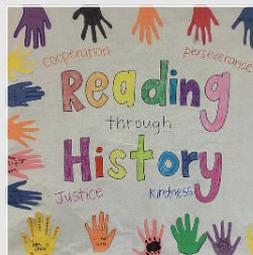
COHERENT

Understanding the CARS framework for participation in discourse and action in many settings



CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMS

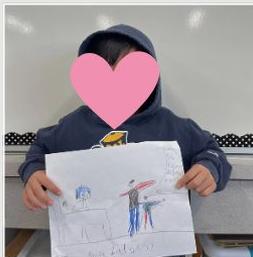
Summer Program & Family Culture Presentations



Focused on qualities each week, learned about social transformation, connected back to family and universal participation/relevance

Invited parents to share about their culture and traditions, encouraging them to share qualities exhibited by family members & ancestors

Focus on Qualities and Capacity-Building in the Classroom



Told stories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá during "kindness week" and did a loving-kindness meditation, built capacity for students to recognize good qualities they see in others

Planned conversations with other teachers and administrators and learned from the CARS model

Discourse at Devotionals and with Family



Led discussions at devotionals about each course to encourage young adults to engage more in discourse on prevalent topics

Became empowered to have the most difficult conversations of my life, in telling my family my decision to become a Baha'i



Discourse about Education & Race in my Neighborhood and School



Planned careful conversations with a mother, discussed the importance of education which led to her enrollment in English classes and her children attending a Baha'i school in Pasadena

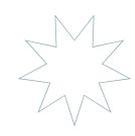
Helped facilitate conversations with youth and junior youth about race and constructive resilience

Educator Gatherings & Decodable Books

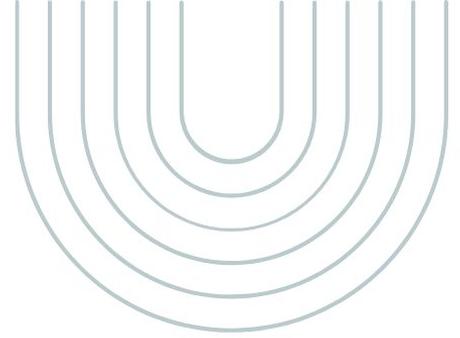


Gathered educators around LA to study relevant texts from the courses that aid us in finding coherence in our various educational endeavors

Began creating decodable books with another Baha'i educator in LA based on literacy concerns that are more relevant and increase the joy of reading in students



REFLECTIONS



01.

Aligned to the Vision of Baha'u'lláh

Most importantly, aligned with the constructive framework of action that applies in all areas of life, including studying sources in light of the Revelation

02.

Invites participation

Discourse with others outside the course about these topics brings them into the process

03.

Beckons new horizons

So many new programs and perspectives being developed as a result of the Certificate Program

04.

Demands effort and movement

Encourages constant deepening understanding, action, and reflection, participation in forums, participation in discourse and projects that allow for growth

05.

Accommodates different strides and paces

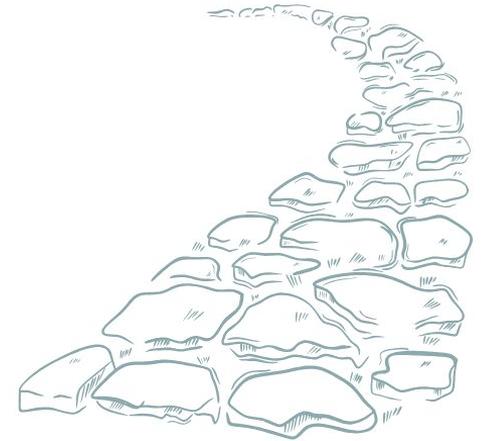
Anyone coming in from any space can walk the path of the Certificate Program and serve where they are

06.

In the company of others

Constant feedback from faculty for direction on projects along with discussion forums and class time with others studying together

QUALITIES OF A PATH OF SERVICE,
RUHI INSTITUTE BOOK 10, UNIT 1





UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, 31 DECEMBER 2021

“It means learning how to raise up vibrant, outward-looking communities; it means those communities learning how to bring about spiritual and material progress; it means learning how to contribute to the discourses that influence the direction of that progress. These areas of endeavor are, naturally, familiar ones. Seen from one perspective, they are quite distinct, each having its own characteristics and imperatives. Yet they all represent ways of awakening the energies latent in the human soul and channeling them towards the betterment of society.”





“Oh ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God’s grace.”

-WILL AND TESTAMENT OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ



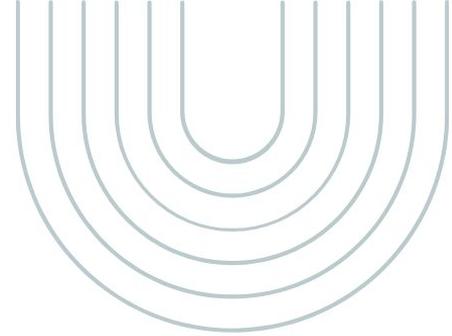
EDUCATION TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Community Psychology background

Social change using experimental
methods (Random Controlled Trials),
research, advocacy, activism,
disruption

Field has changed – tension between
scientific method and decoloniality

Social change as a contentious process





AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE – SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Means consistent with the ends

Increase community building and public discourse capacity –
Consultation, Action, Reflection, Study

Social must be in harmony with our physical world – place, respect, care
for our environment

Reconstruction of race and Blackness in the U.S.

Respect and incorporate multiple ways of knowing





PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Evaluation, Coalition Building, Strategic Planning

Maternal Infant Health and Educational Inequities

Continued path regarding the inadequacy of “programs”

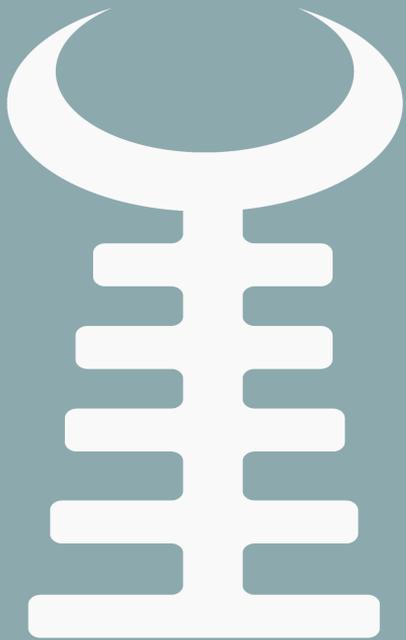
We cannot dance around the topic of racism

Working with community coalitions – unity focus

What kind of work am I willing to do?

Changing my methods even more – bring forth voices





Akoben/War horn

A call to action, readiness, and
voluntarism

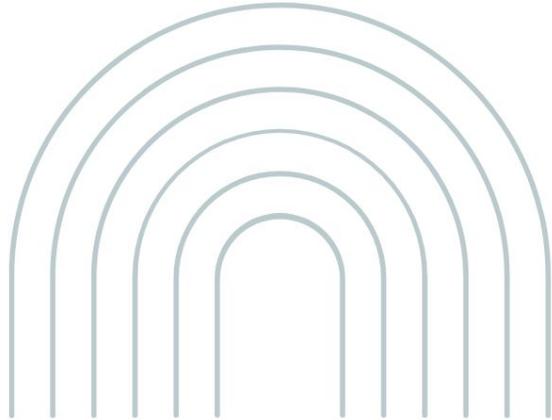
O thou who art the manifestation of My truth!

If thou art slumbering upon thy couch, lift up thy head; and if thou art seated, by the power of My name, arise; and if thou art standing, in thy yearning for My beauty, take flight; and if thou art in flight, through My sovereign might, ascend; and if thou art in ascent, by the majesty of My Cause, halt in the firmament of the Spirit. Open then thy lips in My name, the Opener. Move then thy tongue in My name, the Mover. Intone then My melodies and proclaim: O denizens of earth and heaven! By the one true God, verily, He Who is the Lord of Eternity hath appeared and shone forth above the horizon of creation through the power of His most lofty, His most exalted sovereignty.

(Additional Tablets and Extracts from Tablets Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh)
www.bahai.org/r/114208718

RE-ENVISIONING COLLECTIVE ADVANCEMENT

Following the threads of unity from
racialization to oneness



- Racialization the throughline of harm
- Spiritual transformation the curative
- Decoloniality the treatment
- Bahá'í framework for action the learning technology/mechanism



Constructive Social Transformation

Any actions addressing a real need with a real solution that aims its efforts beyond the shortcomings of the current social order and its systems



CENTERING BLACKNESS

My Intention:

Explore alignment between the Baha'i framework for Social Action & the Visionary Threads Power Narrative framework





technoLIEgy and other far west asian fables

(a reflection on the lies sustainability told and the future that still resides in our afro-indigenous futuristic imaginings)

Activity

Insight Quilt

*Meaningful reflections,
challenging thoughts*



THANK YOU!



Scan me

Human Prosperity and Sustainable Development



Certificate Program Academic Course

Examine the theoretical underpinnings, spiritual and material frameworks, and local and global applications of sustainability.



START DATE
SEPTEMBER 11, 2024



DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION
AUGUST 12, 2024



REGISTER NOW

www.wilmetteinstitute.org
learn@wilmetteinstitute.org

10-week, 3-credit, tuition-free* online course

*Limited admissions each term



Wilmette Institute

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