A Note from the Chair

It has been a busy year for the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace program. In 2015, we launched a new course, held seven talks, three symposia, and one conference.

As the condition of the world deteriorated with the spread of intolerance, fanaticism, sectarianism, and economic inequalities, the programs at the Bahá’í Chair stayed focused on a process of learning, research, and education to advance greater understanding about removing the obstacles to peacemaking and advancing solutions that lead to the well-being of all peoples. Scholars and practitioners offered their insights and analysis of the barriers to peace, while at the same time, they explored potential solutions to issues and challenges faced by governments and peoples throughout the world.

The importance of this unique educational process is in the relationship it promotes between academic investigation and human values. As an all-inclusive model of peacebuilding, the program links together the social, material, and spiritual components of society. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the support that the program has received from all corners of the world. This support has made it possible for the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace to accomplish a very successful 2015.

Thank you,

Hoda Mahmoudi
The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace
This international conference addressed the broad, complex spectrum of how to remove obstacles that pose barriers to global peace. Ten scholars and practitioners from throughout the world, representing multiple disciplines, presented bold ideas about global transformations in search of solutions that lead to a better world. Nearly three hundred people attended the conference.

Major themes discussed at the conference centered on security and justice in global governance, structural racism, women’s peace movements in rebuilding societies, collective security, sectarianism and totalitarianism in the twenty-first century, constructive responses to oppression, and equitable water use and protection.

Global Transformations: Context and Analytics for a Durable Peace
October 7–9, 2015

Speakers included:

Dr. William Bowerman,
University of Maryland

Dr. Prudence L. Carter,
Stanford University

Ms. Bani Dugal,
Bahá’í International Community

Professor Nazila Ghanea,
University of Oxford

Dr. Anne Marie Goetz,
New York University

Dr. Joseph L. Graves, Jr.,
North Carolina A&T State
University/UNC Greensboro

Ms. Ellen Laipson,
Stimson Center

Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi,
The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland

Dr. Joshua Mitchell,
Georgetown University

Mr. Giancarlo Mazzanti,
Architect from Bogotá, Colombia
Professor Mahmoudi’s Class

Professor Mahmoudi led an honors class seminar on “The Problem of Prejudice: Overcoming Impediments to Global Peace and Justice.” The course draws from interdisciplinary scholarly research in examining factors that explain the root causes of prejudice manifested in its different forms. Her class of twenty students was one of a special series of small classes designed to facilitate open discussion and critical thinking. Rather than being taught about prejudice and peace, students were able to discuss various kinds of prejudice, with topics including racial prejudice in America, nationalism, sexism, and religious extremism.

Ultimately, the issue of prejudice is one that comes down to the individual. It is something that impacts all of us, which is why I would recommend this class for anyone who wants to be a better human being.

— Vicky Yu, student enrolled in the class

Through a series of in-depth academic papers, articles, and documentaries, students were able to gather information to develop independent opinions that they brought to the class discussions. The safe environment allowed students to discuss potentially controversial topics honestly and comfortably, leading to deeper understanding of solutions to prejudice. By the end of the semester, the class was brainstorming ways to solve such major issues on the University of Maryland campus. — Samantha Ernst, student enrolled in the class

Recent Publication

The thirtieth anniversary special edition of The Promise of World Peace, prepared for publication by the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, College Park, compiles the original 1985 message from the Universal House of Justice to the peoples of the world in ten languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili. The statement calls attention to the value of establishing agreement on principles from, which people of goodwill can devise practical solutions to the barriers to peace. This book is available for purchase on Amazon.
2015 Events Recap

**Racial Prejudice and Education Symposium**  
February 5, 2015

Dr. Pedro A. Noguera, New York University  
Dr. Odis Johnson, Jr., Washington University in St. Louis

This symposium analyzed the role and potential of education in reducing racial inequality in American society. Over the years, the “achievement gap” in the United States as test-score inequality became an intractable reality, even as No Child Left Behind aimed to eliminate it by 2014.

---

**Mars, Venus, or Planet Earth? Women & Men on Campus in a New Millennium**  
February 25, 2015

Dr. Michael Kimmel, Stony Brook University

Kimmel discussed the myths about the differences between men and women, suggesting that women and men aren’t so different after all. Surveying the landscape of current controversies about gender, he showed how men and women are transforming our modern-day culture.

---

**Iranian Women Writers: A Moderating and Modernizing Force**  
March 25, 2015

Dr. Farzaneh Milani, University of Virginia

This presentation discussed the desegregation of a predominantly all-male literary tradition and the remarkable emergence of women writers as a transformative socio-political force in Iran. Milani examined the “literary renaissance” of women writers in Iran beginning with Tahereh Quorratol’Ayn in the late nineteenth century to the decades after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

---

**Persian Women and Other Lies: Story-Telling as Historical Retrieval**  
April 2, 2015

Dr. Bahiyyih Nakhjavani, author

Bahiyyih Nakhjavani discussed her book, The Woman Who Read Too Much, a fictional story based on the life of Tahereh Quorratol’Ayn in Persia in the mid-nineteenth century. She explores a society that clings to the old ways even as the world around it is rapidly transforming. When a female poet, a historical figure who was also a theologian and revolutionary, dares to reject the veil and begin agitating for female literacy, her campaign shakes the very foundations of Persian society.

---

**Globalization and Governance Symposium**  
April 29, 2015

Dr. Amitav Acharya, American University  
Dr. Virginia Haufler, University of Maryland

This symposium assessed how the emerging world order is neither multipolar nor bipolar, but a “multiplex.” At the same time, globalization has created many problems that cross-transnational boundaries and escape the oversight of traditional governments.
2015 Events Recap

**Nonviolent Islam: Social Change for a Better Society**
May 6, 2015

**Dr. R. Ahmad**, visiting scholar at the University of Maryland from the University of Peshawar, Pakistan, Ahmad discussed the role of Islam as a nonviolent religion and its role in contemporary societies.

**From the Front Lines - A Personal Reflection on Being a Doctor in Soweto**
August 4, 2015

**Dr. Gloria Teckie**, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital
Teckie is a specialist physician working in Johannesburg, South Africa, at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital—a large public hospital which serves approximately six million people from Soweto and the southern parts of Johannesburg.

**Capturing the Truth: Investigating the Role of Media in War & Peace**
October 28, 2015

**Dr. Jon-Christopher Bua**, political analyst and White House commentator
In his talk, Jon-Christopher Bua discussed the role of media in accurately representing politics and current events, particularly in times of war and conflict.

**Symposium on Structural Violence in Philadelphia and Baltimore**
November 6, 2015

**Dr. Jooyoung Lee**, University of Toronto, Canada; Urban Ethnography Project at Yale University
**Dr. Joseph B. Richardson, Jr.**, University of Maryland; Violence Intervention Research Project at Prince George’s Hospital Trauma Center
Lee explored the social construction of near death amongst young black men who survive shootings in Philadelphia—a city that averages close to one murder per day—who often reframe their shooting as a “traumatic rebirth” or a positive experience that will ultimately benefit them in the long run. From a lens of structural violence, Richardson looked back at the consequences following the death of Freddie Gray in April 2015 while in police custody, which sparked days of protest in Baltimore, the highest rate of homicides in nearly four decades, and by mid-August 2015 more homicides than all of 2014.

**Cascades of Violence and Global Governance of Peace**
November 16, 2015

**Mr. John Braithwaite**, Australian National University
Braithwaite discussed the role of the state in war and crime. Cascades of nonviolence are often hijacked by cascades of violence, as seen with Syria and the Arab Spring. Less visible is the phenomenon of cascades of violence being hijacked by cascades of nonviolence: the civil wars in Bougainville, South Africa, East Timor, and Nepal illustrate. Braithwaite examined what global governance can do to steer the planet away from cascades of violence.

To stay updated on events, visit: bahai.umd.edu/events
About The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace

The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland is an endowed academic program that advances interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace. While drawing certain initial insights from religion, the program aims to develop a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies that lead to the creation of a better world.

Giving to the Chair

The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland welcomes your support in raising awareness about its important and timely mission in examining pathways to peace. As a self-supporting academic program, the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace is grateful for and appreciates contributions of any amount in support of its activities. Please make your check for the Bahá’í Chair payable to the University System of Maryland Foundation, Inc., and also include “Bahá’í Chair Operating Fund” on the memo line. More information is available at bahai.umd.edu/giving.