



Youth

Youth in the Vanguard

Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Youth

# Youth

Youth is a special time in life. You leave the dependence of childhood behind. Your body grows and matures to fulfill its physical potential, with associated hormonal changes and challenges. Your brain also matures, pruning unnecessary connections and developing new capacities for intellectual accomplishments and spiritual exploration. You can experiment and discover all your hidden potentials, choose a profession, cultivate friendships, and launch yourself on a life of service.

# Youth capacity

*In the young people of the world ... lies a reservoir of capacity to transform society waiting to be tapped.*

(Universal House of Justice, quoted in Bahá'í International Community, *In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society*, 2024)

# Youth

*Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth.*

*Blessed are the steadfast and well is it with those who are firm.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §1)

# Youth

*The youth must grow and develop and take the place of their fathers, that this abundant grace, in the posterity of each one of the loved ones of God who bore great agonies, may day by day increase, until in the end it shall yield its fruit on earth and in Heaven.*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §2)

# Youth

*O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life; grant ye true health to the ailing. Be ye apprentices of God; be ye physicians directed by God, and heal ye the sick among humankind. Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. Make the despairing to be filled with hope. Waken them that slumber; make the heedless mindful. Such are the fruits of this earthly life.*

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §3)*



# Youth

In the young people of the world lies a vast reservoir of capacity to advance the constructive transformation of society. Experience has consistently demonstrated that the desire to bring about positive change and the ability to render meaningful service to the common good are characteristic of the period of youth, irrespective of background or personal circumstance.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*



# Youth

In places where this potential has been recognized and conditions created to release it, new patterns of interaction have begun to emerge between generations. This has opened space for youth to take their rightful place in carrying forward the good work of those who came before them. They have similarly taken up the vital service of mentoring those younger than themselves in devoting their precious energies to social progress and transformation.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Youth

A still more profound rethinking of the attitudes and assumptions related to the period of youth will be needed if greater masses of the world's young people are to contribute their full share in devising solutions to humanity's most pressing challenges. Before young and old alike, then, rises a critical need and an unparalleled opportunity: undertaking a widespread exploration of the role to be played by young people in the advancement and transformation of society.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Youth

While often lauded as the promise of the future, youth are also frequently framed as a looming threat—of mischief, protest, violence—or a potential problem to be solved. Fundamental contradictions thus emerge around the way young people are conceived and the role they are to play in society. Such contradictions are detrimental to youth themselves, but also to the communities and institutions that shape and are shaped by them.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Youth

Young people possess vital qualities: their altruism and acute sense of justice, their vitality and vigor, their flexibility of mind and creativity, their desire to contribute to the construction of a better world.

We require fundamental changes in how young people are understood, viewed, treated, educated, and supported within societies and local communities.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society*, 2024)



# Building Youth Capacity

The vast majority of the world's billion-plus young people will make their first and most immediate contributions to the common good by improving conditions in their local environment. It is within their own neighborhood or village that most will acquire the experience, capacities, and attitudes on which subsequent efforts to shape society at the national or international levels will be founded.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Building Youth Capacity

To overcome the many challenges facing humanity—establishing sustainable relationships with the natural world, for example, or eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty—we need capable young leaders not by the tens and dozens but by the hundreds of thousands.

What distinctive role can youth play as effective actors shaping their societies' development?

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society*, 2024)

# Building Youth Capacity

The worldwide Bahá'í community programme for the moral empowerment of young adolescents serves some 300,000 young people in 35,000 neighborhood- and village-based groups, in 180 countries. A network of 330 national and regional training institutes, dedicated to developing capacities central to the advancement of civilization, has enabled youth and adults together to sustain several hundred thousand community-building activities at any given time.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society*, 2024)





# Building Youth Capacity

Endeavors that grow in scale and impact, particularly those that prove sustainable over time, consistently begin as smaller initiatives characterized by certain qualities. These include individuals' ability to develop new capacities and learn, to explain the significance of their efforts and inspire others to become active supporters, to accommodate and coordinate growing levels of complexity. Often initially sustained by a core group of just a few dedicated individuals, such efforts begin on a modest scale and grow as capacity within the local population develops.

*(Bahá'í International Community, [In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society](#), 2024)*

# Building Youth Capacity

Countless young people look to their societies and, aside from economic challenges and material hardships, they also see standards of basic decency waning and capacity for good-faith dialogue ebbing. They see leaders and institutions of all kinds discredited by corruption and inadequacy. They see notions of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, increasingly dismissed as irrelevant in favor of the pursuit of self-interest and the struggle for power. And they are convinced that no amount of material or technological advancement will make up for the absence of trustworthiness and honesty, generosity and camaraderie, commitment to truth and a sense of responsibility.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Building Youth Capacity

Qualities of character such as these are the building blocks of a stable social order. For this reason, young people's ability to better their communities has been greatly enhanced by programmes that assist them to apply constructive moral and ethical principles, in action, to advance both personal growth and social transformation. Participation in training of this kind has assisted youth to protect themselves against forces that would manipulate their sense of identity according to the vested interests of others: for example, those that would define them primarily as consumers to be satiated, voters to be persuaded, or viewers to be entertained.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Building Youth Capacity

Such programmes have helped young people hold and deepen convictions about the kind of individuals they can become and the kind of societies they can call into being—convictions that a peaceful and just world is possible, for example, that deep change for the betterment of society can be consciously advanced, that the capacity for nobility is inherent in the human spirit.

(Bahá'í International Community, *In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society*, 2024)

# Building Youth Capacity

The practical application of such ideals is explored through study of educational materials, discussion of key concepts, and practical acts of service. Understanding is refined through ongoing processes of consultation, where those involved can hold differing views without falling into animosity and disagree while still collaborating to find points of consensus.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Building Youth Capacity

When assisted to explore issues of moral purpose over time and at depth, youth have demonstrated far greater capacity to overcome setbacks with resilience, to remain free from cynicism and bitterness in the face of adversity, and to protect hope and maintain a spirit of joy even in times of difficulty. Such qualities allow young people to sustain efforts for social change, not just for a year or two, but over the course of an entire lifetime.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Youth

Today's generation of youth inherits a world undergoing change and turmoil in ways never before witnessed. Humanity has never held more power to shape the physical world on planetary scales, for example, yet climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution pose existential threats. Digital technologies are evolving at a pace scarcely imagined even in recent years, opening vast possibilities but adding further uncertainty to a world already destabilized by gross inequalities, growing polarization, and social fragmentation.

(Bahá'í International Community, *In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society*, 2024)



# Youth

In a parallel process of coming of age themselves, young people have a crucial part to play in helping humanity navigate this tumultuous passage to maturity. Young people have repeatedly proven their readiness to take on a significant measure of responsibility for the well-being of those around them and for the advancement of their societies.

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Youth

Unleashing the full capacities of each generation of young people, then, is a pressing concern for all. How is the period of youth, brimming with possibility, to play its fullest role in the great endeavor of bringing about an ever-advancing global society?

*(Bahá'í International Community, In the Vanguard: The Role of Youth in an Ever-Advancing Global Society, 2024)*

# Youth in the Vanguard

*Youth ... are once more summoned to the vanguard of a movement aimed at nothing less than the transformation of the world.*

(Universal House of Justice)



# Shoghi Effendi on Youth

*The Bahá'í youth must be taught how to teach the Cause of God. Their knowledge of the fundamentals of the Faith must be deepened and the standard of their education in science and literature enhanced. They must become thoroughly familiar with the language used and the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His public addresses throughout the West. They must also be acquainted with those essential prerequisites of teaching as recorded in the Holy Books and Tablets.*

(Shoghi Effendi, 1925, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §6)

# Shoghi Effendi on Youth

*I strongly urge you to devote, while you are pursuing your studies, as much time as you possibly can to a thorough study of the history and Teachings of our Beloved Cause. This is the prerequisite of a future successful career of service to the Bahá'í Faith in which I hope and pray you will distinguish yourself in the days to come.*

(Shoghi Effendi, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §7)

# Shoghi Effendi on Youth

*The youthful and eager workers for the Cause ... occupy a warm place in my heart.... I urge them to study profoundly the revealed utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and the discourses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and not to rely unduly on the representation and interpretation of the Teachings given by Bahá'í speakers and teachers.*

(Shoghi Effendi, 1929, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §8)

# Shoghi Effendi on Youth

*The highest standards of purity, of integrity, of detachment and sacrifice must be maintained by the members of your group in order to enable you to play a decisive part in the spread and consolidation of the Faith. A tremendous responsibility has been laid upon you, and nothing short of a pure, a virtuous, an active and truly exemplary life can enable you to fulfil your high destiny.*

(Shoghi Effendi, 1934, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §9)





# Youth

It is high time for the Bahá'ís to try and reach the thinking and educated youth of the country upon whom so much of the future depends, especially the stupendous task of applying the spirit and letter of the Bahá'í teachings to the requirements of the time—a work for which generations of preparation might be necessary.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1928, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §13)

# Youth education

Being a Bahá'í you are certainly aware of the fact that Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the programme of the Bahá'í youth all over the world.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §15)

# Youth public speaking

The youth should be encouraged to train themselves in public speaking while they are still pursuing their studies in schools or colleges.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1931, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §18)

# Youth facing difficulties

Life is not easy for the young people of this generation. They enter life with a heart full of hope, but find before themselves nothing but failures, and see in the future nothing but darkness. What they need is the light manifested by Bahá'u'lláh, for that brightens their soul and stimulates their vigour in facing difficulties.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1933, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §24)

# Youth example

It is always gratifying to learn of the splendid effects which the teachings of the Cause inevitably bring in the hearts and minds of young Bahá'í men and women and to witness their eagerness to mould and shape their entire living according to the divine teachings bequeathed to the world by Bahá'u'lláh. For the Bahá'í youth constitute the main active element in the Cause. Theirs is the duty not only to study and to spread the Teachings but to put them into actual practice.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1933, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §26)

# Youth scholars

The Cause needs more Bahá'í scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1943, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §43)

# Youth teachers

The Cause has the remedy for all the world's ills. The reason why more people don't accept it is because the Bahá'ís are not always capable of presenting it to them in a way that meets the immediate needs of their minds. Young Bahá'ís like yourself must prepare themselves to really bring the Message to their generation, who need it so desperately and who can understand the language it speaks so well. He would advise you among other books to study the Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as His method of approaching the mind of the public cannot be surpassed... He also advises you to develop yourself as a public speaker so you will be increasingly able to teach the Cause...

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1943, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §43)



# Youth Example

...the youth, in particular, must constantly and determinedly strive to exemplify a Bahá'í life. In the world around us we see moral decay, promiscuity, indecency, vulgarity, bad manners—the Bahá'í young people must be the opposite of these things, and, by their chastity, their uprightness, their decency, their consideration and good manners, attract others, old and young, to the Faith. The world is tired of words; it wants example, and it is up to the Bahá'í youth to furnish it.

(on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1946, quoted in *Youth*, compiled by the Research Department of UHJ, §56)