

"I Have a Dream"



During the celebration of Martin Luther King, my teacher asked us to write an essay about what our dream would be, and to use the famous words of Dr. King. When I got home, I told my mom that I would like to write about the Bahá'í leaders called the Yaran, meaning "Friends," so that my classmates and friends would know about the injustice Bahá'ís are enduring in Iran. It is really my desire and dream that the Yaran and other Bahá'ís be freed, as well as all the people in the world who are suffering because of their religion.

I volunteered to read my essay in front of my class. At first, I was very scared, because I did not know how my friends would react. But I said a quick prayer in my heart and read it.

Many of my classmates were shocked about what was happening to the Bahá'ís and did not know about the Faith. When my teacher gave me back my essay, he wrote, "You represent your religion very well. You should be proud of yourself. Excellent essay. I learned a lot."



Brian's *Essay*

I am happy to stand in front of you today, to talk about the discrimination and prejudices that are happening in Iran with the Bahá'ís.

The Bahá'í Faith is the world's most recent religion, originating in Persia, now called Iran. It was founded by a noble Persian man named Bahá'u'lláh, which means the "Glory of God." In 1863, Bahá'u'lláh declared that He was the one announced by other Manifestations of God, such as Abraham, Buddha, Krishna, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad.

The Bahá'í Faith is an independent world religion. Today, there are over five million Bahá'ís, all around the world.

The main purpose of the Bahá'í Faith is unity. Bahá'ís do not make a distinction between the various races of humanity. We believe in "unity in diversity," because we all come from the same human race. The Bahá'í Faith is a progressive and continuous revelation of

other previous religions. The only difference comes from the social factors that change over time. For example, Bahá'ís believe in equality of rights between men and women, abolition of prejudices, universal education, etc.

The Bahá'í Faith also teaches the unity of religion. From its conception, the Bahá'ís have been persecuted and martyred because of their beliefs. In the mid-1800s, some 20,000 followers were killed by the authorities who viewed this new religion as a threat to Islam.

In the 20th century, many events of violence were directed against Bahá'ís in Iran. For example, many of the Bahá'í books were confiscated from their homes, Bahá'ís who got married under the principles of the Faith found that their marriage was not recognized, some were fired from their jobs, and some Bahá'í holy places were destroyed.

Have a Dream

By Brian Aka, age 12

With the Iranian revolution in 1979, the persecution of the Bahá'ís increased. Since that time, more than 200 Bahá'ís were killed. Many more were put in prison or lost their jobs, and many children and youth were not allowed to go to school or universities. In 1983, 10 women were hanged. The youngest one was a 17-year-old girl who was teaching children's classes, talking about virtues and good deeds.

In 2010, seven Iranian Bahá'í leaders (two women and five men) called the Yaran, or "Friends," who formerly looked after the needs of Iran's Bahá'í community, were sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment.

Today, I have a dream:

I have a dream that one day, in Iran, and in other places of the world where Bahá'ís are persecuted, the government will allow the children and youth to go back to school and universities.

I have a dream that one day, all the Bahá'ís imprisoned because of their beliefs will be released from prison, so they can go back to their families.

I have a dream that one day, I could have the courage to help free them.

I have a dream that one day, justice will prevail.

I have a dream that one day, the people of Iran will be friends with the Bahá'ís.

I have a dream that one day, people will come together, and help end this discrimination based on religious beliefs in Iran.

I have a dream that one day, all religions will be united.

Let "Freedom" be our motto. Let "Unity" be our action. Let "Love to Humankind" be our mission.



The Yaran



The Yaran, Bahá'í leaders in Iran, were unjustly imprisoned in 2008 by the government of Iran because of their spiritual beliefs.

Speak Out for Justice

Want to stand up for justice? Try these tips.

- ☐ What topic are you passionate about? Whether it affects your hometown or the entire planet, learn as much as you can about it. Research the facts and become an expert.
 - ☐ Imagine a world without this problem. How would it look and feel? Start writing your thoughts.
 - ☐ Think of creative ways to share your vision. Use your talents in writing, art, music, speaking, and more.
 - ☐ Share your vision in things like school projects, blogs, or letters to the local newspaper.
 - ☐ Invite friends and family to join your efforts.
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