

# Louis George Gregory



Baha'i Faith Leader

*Photo courtesy of National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.*

Louis George Gregory (1874-1951), a descendant of black slaves and white slave owners, devoted his life to championing unity among the races in the United States of America during the early 1900s.

Gregory's maternal grandmother was "wholly of African blood" and his maternal grandfather was the white owner of the Darlington County plantation where she labored. Gregory was influenced during his entire life by this grandmother who drew on her profound spiritual beliefs and chose not to hate, even after the lynching of her blacksmith husband at the hands of Klansmen.

Gregory's parents were both slaves freed by the Civil War. After the death of his biological father, his free-born stepfather, Colonel George Gregory, gave him his name along with many of the advantages that could be offered in the South during Reconstruction.

Louis Gregory's education at the Avery Institute, Fisk University, and then Howard University's School of Law established him as one of the "Talented Tenth" W.E.B. DuBois' term for the capable, educated African Americans of the time.

Gregory established a successful law practice and became a rising star in Washington, D.C. There, he and other black leaders, such as Dubois, struggled over the issues of race that tore at the country and their own hearts. In 1909, Gregory became one of first followers of the Baha'i Faith in the United States, attracted largely by its teachings on the oneness of humanity. His extraordinary intellectual abilities and character propelled him into positions of responsibility in the clergyless religion during critical formative years of the American Baha'i community.

In 1912 he was elected to its nine-member national administrative body, becoming one of the first Blacks in the U.S. elected to leadership in a predominantly white organization. He was subsequently re-elected fifteen times. That same year, Gregory wed Louisa Mathew, a highly educated white English woman. Together, they shared a loving 40-year marriage, joined in "one spirit, one purpose."



Gregory spoke and published articles on oneness and peace in addition to initiating "race amity" conventions across the country that featured such figures as Jane Addams, Harlem Renaissance philosopher Alain Locke, and anthropologist Franz Boas. The conventions attracted thousands of participants from all races and religions.

In 1917, Gregory left a successful law practice business and turned down an offer of a position on the Howard Law faculty to speak on oneness and equality at locations throughout the country. He traveled for 15 years to 48 states. The Gregory's sold their home to finance his journeys.

Though sometimes in danger and often unable even to travel with his wife, he spoke at colleges, churches, civic groups and women's clubs—addressing handfults to thousands with a dignity, eloquence and persuasiveness that made his a household name in black homes east of the Mississippi. He likely reached more people with the message of racial equality than any other figure of his day—primarily through personal contact.

On July 30, 1951, Louis Gregory passed away with his beloved wife at his side. In 1982 an exhaustive biography, *To Move the World*, was published. Schools, centers, and projects across the globe were named for him, including the Louis G. Gregory Baha'i Institute and WLGI Radio Baha'i, both in Hemingway, SC. Hundreds of children of all colors around the world also have been named in his memory.

In 2003, the first Charleston museum honoring any individual was established in Louis Gregory's childhood home.

# January

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						<b>New Year's Day</b> Emancipation Proclamation issued in 1863.  1
William Lloyd Garrison began publishing <i>The Liberator</i> , an abolitionist newspaper, in 1831.  2	Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. was elected chairperson of the House Committee on Education and Labor in 1961.  3	Grace Bumbry, opera singer, was born in 1937.  4	George Washington Carver died in 1943.  5	The World Anti-Slavery Convention opened in London, 1831. John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie, famed musician, died in 1993.  6	Marian Anderson made her debut in the Metropolitan Opera House in 1955.  7	Fannie M. Jackson, educator and first African American woman college graduate in the US, was born in 1836. Butterfly McQueen, actress, born in 1911.  8
Fisk University established in 1866.  9	Southern Christian Leadership Conference founded in 1957.  10	Charles W. Anderson becomes first African American member of the Kentucky Legislature in 1936.  11	The Congressional Black Caucus organized in 1971.  12	Don Barksdale became first African American to play in an NBA All-Star Game, 1953.  13	John Oliver Killens, novelist, was born in 1916.  14	Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in 1929.  15
Jefferson Franklin Long took oath of office as first African American Congressman from Georgia, 1871.  16	<b>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, (Observed)</b> Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) born in 1942.  17	Robert C. Weaver became first African American presidential cabinet member, 1966.  18	Freed Blacks organized Savannah GA's first Baptist church in 1788.  19	<b>Inauguration Day</b> Barbara Jordan, congresswoman, was born in 1936.  20	William Brown-Chappell, pioneer aviator, was born in 1906.  21	Nat Turner, leader of the Virginia slave revolt, was born in 1800.  22
Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, pioneer in surgery, founded Provident Hospital in Chicago, IL, in 1889.  23	Coach Clarence "Big House" Gaines won record 800th college basketball game in 1990.  24	Sojourner Truth addressed the first Black Women's Rights Convention, 1851.  25	Bessie Coleman, first African American woman aviator, born in 1893. Angela Davis, activist, born in 1944.  26	Leontyne Price, world-renowned opera singer, made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera House, 1961.  27	Astronaut Ronald McNair died in Challenger explosion in 1986.  28	Oprah Winfrey born in 1954.  29
William Wells Brown, novelist and dramatist, published first Black drama, <i>Leap to Freedom</i> , 1858.  30	Jackie Robinson, first African American baseball player in the major leagues, was born in 1919.  31					