

**You've got to learn
to leave the table
when love's no
longer being
served.**

- Nina Simone

Can You Feel It?

There's a sun shining! Talk about coming out from under a rock...people are dancing in the streets. What a relief it is!

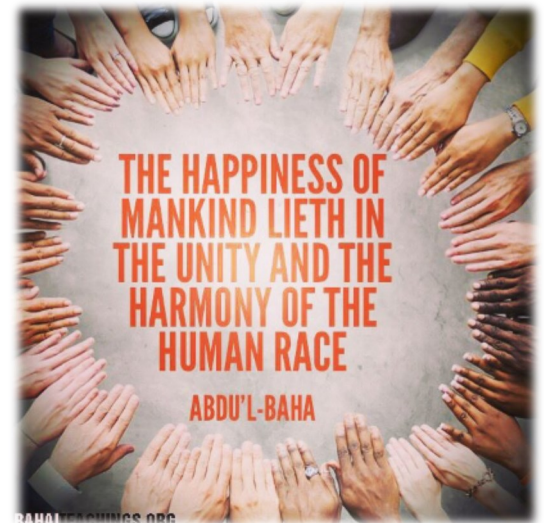
Who knew that there was so much pent-up anxiety around today's Inauguration? Who knew? We're a people gone mad with joy and delight. And I imagine those who are not so happy are feeling some kind of way, and I hope our joy is infectious and touches their hearts.

It's been a long haul for the past four years. And last year, 2020, gave us the greatest scare on earth and it's still not done with us yet.

However, 2021 has started off with a bang so we still may have some rough waters ahead. These past two weeks have been rather intense while many of us sat on the edge of our seats waiting for this day to come to re-establish civility.

Oh my God! We needed a win and "they" sure enough delivered the greatest show on earth – an Inauguration for the people. It doesn't matter what your political persuasion is, today's Inauguration was an inspiration to all. It was a reminder of all of the aspects of "us" that is good and beautiful and brave. It takes all of "us" to make those aspirations of what this country is about truly come to life.

I don't know about you, but I don't need another reminder like the one we had two weeks ago to appreciate this whole idea of democracy. Maybe one day it will be more than an ideal if we can maintain the sense of harmony that was felt by so many today.



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I'm listening to John Legend singing **Feeling Good** and I know he's singing it for a whole bunch of us. If you're feeling good, then tell somebody and maybe they will feel good too!

Savor the moments because we've got a long road ahead and there may be periods of dry spells in between the joys and the sorrows so enjoy this moment.

There's a lot of work to do and while we're in this spirit of love and good will, let's spread it around. Who do you want to give it to? What do you want to do? Look around you. Where is there a need? Get into it and do it.

You can tell I'm feeling it and that's why I'm talking to you right now! My story hasn't changed. I'm going to keep on doing what I've been doing for long as I've known to do it, and I'm going to kick it up a notch. You feelin' me?

In 2020 we had a whole year of extremes:

- Extreme illness
- Extreme sadness
- Extreme amount of deaths
- Extreme unemployment
- Extreme disappointment in not being able to connect with each other socially
- Extreme needs for help and housing
- Extreme voter turnout
- Extreme political tension
- Extreme disrespect & manipulation
- Extreme lack of character
- Extreme disregard for the greater good for all
- Extreme storms, fires, and floods
- Extreme despair
- ... and more of the same day in and day out!

Oh, but Thank God! At the opposite end of the spectrum we had Extreme HOPE with the prospect of a cure for the coronavirus, Extreme LOVE among family, friends and neighbors while helping each other through, Extreme GIVING to those in need from people all across the nation and all over the world, Extreme CREATIVITY as teachers struggled to find a way to help the children maintain their grades and keep their hope alive, Extreme community CONNECTION and INVOLVEMENT to help each other through, Extreme GRATITUDE for the essential workers and the doctors and nurses who have worked tirelessly in spite of the loss and the pain coming from so many different directions, EXTREME faith as we navigate this season in our lives and trust that there are better days ahead.

It is the pain and the promise that we live with. It is the promise of a new tomorrow that we live for. In spite of the darkness, we know there is light and we can walk in that light right now.

As a nation of people, we have a long way to go in so many, many ways but, gosh darn it, I think today was a turning point in ways we've never known before and I think we've been trying to get here for a long, long time. Maybe it took all of that shaking up to get us to waking up.

So, what's so different about today? Although I'm not one to talk much about politics and the enormous challenges inherent in running a country, seeing such a beautiful mixture of faces and races on the platform at the Inauguration filled my cup with love, and love is my religion.

So, about those extremes...will you consider doing something totally out of your comfort zone? Something extreme? Will you consider doing something extremely loving? I don't know what that will look like for you and you might not either, but give it some thought. This could be our year of EXTREMES towards all the things that make our lives deliciously beautiful, fulfilling, and amazing. How about it?

Following are a few ideas:

- ◇ Dolly Parton's birthday was yesterday, January 19th. She turned 75 years old. When asked what she wanted for her birthday, she said that all she wants is **"A Call for Kindness"**. If that was your birthday wish, how would you like to see it play out? Because it could be. You could ask your friends and loved ones to be kind in ways that are out of the ordinary and they could give you a card or a letter saying what they did for someone else.
- ◇ Another birthday idea is to **donate gifts**. Instead of accepting gifts from your family and friends, ask them to donate to your favorite charity.
- ◇ Children have been exceedingly generous this past year and have done some extraordinary things. One ten-year old girl decided to **make cards for people** in the nursing home and, when she was all done, she had made a total of 200 cards. The ones they showed on TV were very cheerful and the nursing home residents loved them.
- ◇ **Teach:** Take the time to teach someone a skill that you know. Teach grandma how to use email or Facebook.
- ◇ **Send a nice email** and tell someone how much you appreciate them or thank them for something that they're not even aware you are grateful for.
- ◇ **Be patient with people.** Sometimes we don't realize when someone might be having a hard time hearing and, as a result, they may not always understand what you are saying. Or, there's the age old understanding of the need for patience in traffic or in lines when you're in the store. Let someone go ahead of you without making it a hassle.
- ◇ **Love:** It's so easy to take those we see on a daily basis for granted. Find ways to say "I love you" that are different than how you normally express yourself. If you know your partner is going to pick up a book in the evening, put a love note in it. Before he/she walks out the door to take out the trash, put a love letter on the floor at the door so they have to pick it up on the way out.
- ◇ **Create a jar full of love notes** and put them on the car seat for your partner to find. They can be handwritten on any kind of paper and folded so that it has to be unwrapped to be read. Talk about the good times and how enjoyable they were and how they make you smile when you think of them—one note at a time. Write legibly.
- ◇ **Create your own coupon** and hand them out to family and friends, such as : free babysitting services for a Saturday nite out, help out with your spring cleaning, shovel your driveway, etc. etc.
- ◇ **Organize a weeks worth of meals** for someone who is shut in or buy groceries.

Take Me Away,
To A Better Place.



Take me away to a better place
Bring me to where no men are slaves
To pride and anger, wealth and fame
Where life becomes a foolish game

Bring me where no angels cry
From the pain the living puts upon their kind
Where saints and sinners are you and me
With our fair share of good and bad deeds

Take me to where wisdom guides
To know religion is but a word that divides
Where it matters not you've two legs or four
That love and respect is deserved by all

Bring mothers and children to sanctuary
Bring families to a world of peace
Take away the darkness of those who abide
By wrongs, so they'll get to see the light

Take us into a world with no one god
For god is the soul that exists in us all
A place of happiness, for we own that right
Where the only difference is the truth and lies



"It is good to
laugh. Laughter is
spiritual
relaxation."

— Abdu'l-Bahá

Peace ♥ Shirley

