

Hands of the Cause of God:
'Ali-Muhammad Varqa:

In 1971 the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Leeward, Windward and Virgin Islands decided to have a international mass teaching project in Barbados, the first in our area.

The team was comprised of US overseas teachers, Shirley Yarbrough, Van Gilmer and Jim Taylor. Ruth Pringle, then an Auxiliary Board Member represented the Continental Board of Counsellors. West Indian Bahá'ís from both Barbados and other Islands made up a large, talented, dedicated team of Bahá'í teachers. I was the coordinator for the National Spiritual Assembly.

It was an exhilarating, exciting project and we all worked very hard and had lots of fun both teaching and being together.

We heard from the Bahá'í grapevine that Dr Varqa was going to be in transit on Barbados from a flight to another destination. I inquired from a high ranking airport official I knew as to whether or not he could get off the plane and speak to us during the flight delay. He told me that as he did not have any visas to be on Barbados soil, it was not possible. He must have seen the very disappointed look on my face, and said that he would arrange for me to board the plane for the short time of its delay. But, he emphasized, only me, no one else!

I, of course, agreed to his term, and told the team. Everyone else was disappointed but we all agreed that we all would go to the airport and perhaps they and they could catch a glimpse of him.

When the time arrived, the airplane landed, passengers got off, and then I could see Dr. Varqa in the open doorway. I started to move out towards the plane, looked around at the team and there was Ruth with a look on her face that was not to be denied. I motioned for her to come with me. In a shot she was at my side and we boarded the plane and there he was, tall, handsome, beautiful eyes, soft complexion, in a lovely beige suit, and he was waiting for us!

He began to talk and Ruth and I did not say a word. When our time was up, we sighed and said goodbye.

As we got to the team, they all began shooting questions; what did he say, did he have any advice for us, where is he going, etc. I turned to Ruth, as she was normally the one who related to stuff like that. She in turn looked at me, and said go ahead, you tell them. OOPS, it seemed as though I could not remember one thing, I don't think I was really listening, just absorbing him. OOPS, it seemed that Ruth had been doing the same thing. Not one thing could we remember to share with them.

Up to now, this team had been very cooperative and willing to follow the direction of the Auxillary Board Member and the project coordinator. This, however, did not

fall into the same category. They were outraged! How could we not know, they said, all you two do is talk, talk, talk...but now when there is something we really want to hear you are both mute...and that was not the end of it, we had to suffer in silence all their complaints. After all, they were right!