

## You and the World

From the beginning of the first quarter until the end of the academic year, half the ninth grade will be participating in a research project entitled *You and the World*. You and the World consists of three blog posts (You and the World, Original Research and Agent of Change), of which this is the final installment. The purpose of You and the World is to inform and educate people about an issue that affects your local, national, or global community - and to take action to improve the state of your issue.

My [first blog post](#) was mostly initial ideas for this project and web-based research. In that post I explored who the Baha'is are and what they believe. My [second blog post](#), the original research portion of this project, is predominantly based on personal interactions and interviews conducted with a [Baha'i Institute of Higher Education \(BIHE\)](#) graduate and teacher. This blog post is centered around my Agent of Change piece, the final portion of this project. The Agent of Change piece is something you have done to bring about change or awareness on your topic.

## Reflections on the Agent of Change portion of this project

For the Agent of Change portion of my *You and the World* project I hosted a screening of [Education Under Fire](#) at the Philadelphia regional Baha'i Center. [Education Under Fire](#) is an in-depth thirty-minute documentary about the persecution of Baha'is in Iran and the resulting foundation of the BIHE. At the screening, a BIHE graduate and current Philadelphia resident spoke about his experience growing up in Iran under the oppressive regime and later, as a BIHE student. To the right is a photograph of Nasan, the aforementioned BIHE student, talking in front of the (now dim) screen. To the left is the flyer that I sent out in order to invite people to the screening.



The Iranian government is very fixed in its ways, and it's very difficult to "force" it to change. But the government isn't immune to international pressure. The biggest hurdle for this project was that so few people knew who the Baha'i are that first I had to explain - and then get into the situation in Iran. I think the first step is to spread the word - something that can be achieved simply through face-to-face conversation or through social media.

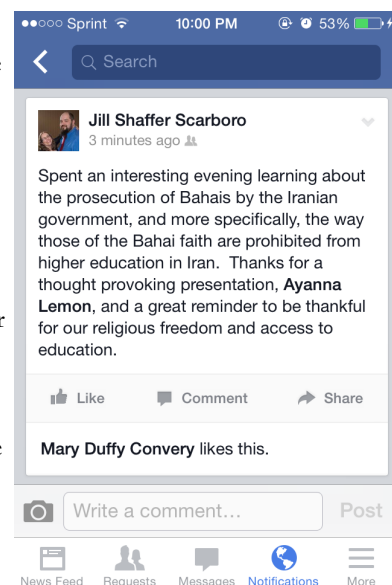
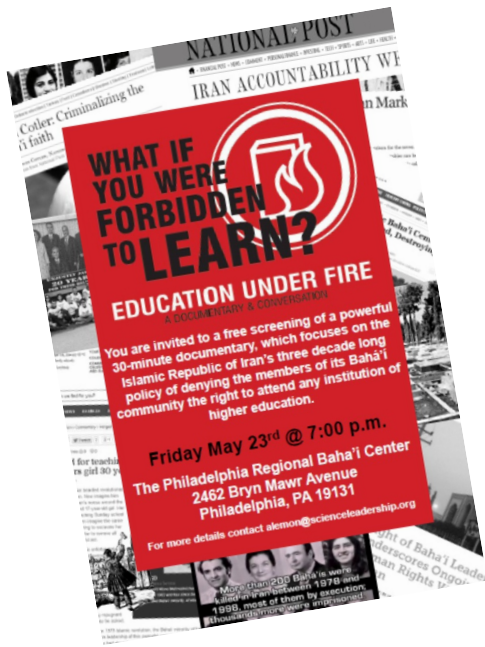
That having been said, while my screening was somewhat lacking in attendance (13 people), I've found that over the last couple of months, this project in-it-of-itself has been the best possible way to bring about awareness - it's been an invaluable key to broaching the subject.

## What are some things that have been or are currently being done to elicit positive change?

- On Friday, May 16th (2014), I went to the inaugural screening of [To Light a Candle](#), another documentary about the persecution of Baha'is in Iran. While both documentaries have their strengths, [To Light a Candle](#), creates a more detailed timeline starting in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution and and BIHE, following up until the present day situation. After the screening, there was a Q&A with the director, [Maziar Bahari](#) (who is not a Baha'i) and a BIHE graduate.

- While the [International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#) focuses on the wider topic of the oppression of Iranians in general, it gives almost daily reports - which often presses for the improvement of the Baha'i situation.
- [The Muslim Network for Baha'i Rights](#), a subsection of [Mideast Youth Network](#) is another group focused on the persecution of Baha'is in Iran. "Our mission is to ensure that the Baha'i community has equal opportunities and the ability to freely practice their faith"

Unfortunately, spreading the word about what's going on is really all the average person can do at this point.



## **Closing Thoughts**

At the *To Light a Candle* screening, a BIHE graduate spoke about how after moving to the United States and joining a University here, she had a hard time getting over the initial shock that she, just like all of the other University students, was able to use the computers and the library facilities. In the States, oftentimes it's difficult to imagine places that lack all of the things that we take for granted. For me, this project was like a wake-up call to the suffering of others. One important lesson I think I can take away from this project is that some issues can't be solved instantaneously, that sometimes, progress is painstakingly gradual... but that if no one ever starts the conversation, that even minimal advancement is impossible.

---

*Special Thanks goes out to Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega and Korinna Shaw for helping me plan and execute the Education Under Fire screening, and to Maaman Razae and Dr. Dara Gay Shaw for taking the time and patience to speak with me.*