

Framing the Terraces story

Telling the story of the opening of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb to the media is a complex and challenging task. There are many stories to tell, depending on the audience and the type of media. The main story is Bahá'u'lláh and His message of hope and unity for the entire human race, but we have to present the story through particular angles or focal points, such as tourism, architecture, landscape design, music, or human interest and multiculturalism. For example, if a young indigenous woman is coming to the opening of the Terraces, perhaps travelling outside her country for the first time, we can tell her story through youth and women's magazines.

The important thing is to internalize and understand deeply the spiritual significance of the projects on Mount Carmel, even if we cannot fully express it in words. Although we may not be able to tell the whole story behind the Terraces to every journalist, we should be able to convey its basic message and adapt our presentation or “pitch” according to their particular interests.

Remember: News is something new, interesting, informative, entertaining, and unusual. A good story is something that you would find interesting to read in a magazine or newspaper, or watch on television. Reporters are competing for an audience share, and their main goal is to hear something that makes them say, “Oh! That’s interesting!”

Success in public information is almost always based on building personal relationships in the media. These relationships should be built with a long-term strategy in mind. As a result of patient and consistent efforts, some of the best coverage of the Terraces may come months after the opening in the form of feature articles or documentaries.

The following ideas may serve as starting points for approaching different media. These ideas are intended to pique a journalist’s interest, and could be developed into a fuller story. Keep in mind that the media may be interested in covering the story before, during and after the event.

- The opening ceremonies on 22 May 2001 will be a showcase of the principle of world citizenship, since they will draw some 3,500 Bahá'ís from virtually every country in the world, many in brilliant native costume. For many it will be their first time away from home, their first time in an airplane, and their first visit to the world center of their Faith.
- The ceremonies will feature an original oratorio by award-winning composer Lasse Thoresen of Norway and a choral symphony by Tolib Shahidi of Tajikistan, performed by artists from Europe, North America and Israel. The following day, performances of indigenous music will precede the reverent first ascent of the Terraces by the diverse participants.
- For Bahá'ís, the completion of the Terraces is concurrent with the Faith's full emergence as a world community and the realization of a century-long dream to create a spiritual and administrative center which will befittingly represent the religion, long persecuted in the land of its birth, Iran.
- The Terraces and Gardens, while designed to promote a feeling of peace, calm, and serenity in visitors, are also highly advanced in their design, featuring the latest in water

management, pest control, and ecological sensitivity. The irrigation systems were developed in consultation with Israeli experts in the field. Recycled water flowing down the mountain drowns out the noise of the city and attracts birds and animals native to the area.

- The Terraces and the two newest administrative buildings were completed over a period of 10 years, at a cost of US\$250 million in voluntary contributions from Bahá'ís worldwide, the vast majority of whom live in the developing world. The Bahá'í Faith only accepts contributions of funds from its own declared members. All 19 terraces will be open to the public for their enjoyment, free of charge.
- With the completion of the Terraces, the number of tourists to Haifa is expected to triple to 1.2 million annually. The city has made the project a key element in its urban renewal campaign, incorporating the restored German Templar colony and the Louis Promenade along the crest of Mount Carmel. Together with the Terraces, they create a 3-kilometer-long pedestrian walkway – one of the most attractive urban developments in the Mediterranean region. Israel's Postal Authority has designed a special 9-centimeter stamp to mark the completion of the Terrace project.
- The Terraces are connected to a series of classically designed buildings that make up the international administrative and spiritual heart of the Bahá'í world community. Through the efforts of Bahá'ís in every country, this historic mountain, held sacred in many traditions, has been transformed into a paradise of gardens, terraces, fountains and running streams – a metaphor of the Bahá'í Faith's central message of unity in diversity.
- Country-specific: Some countries have a connection to the project that could be of interest to media in that country; for example, Canadian architects have played a key role in designing the buildings and Terraces on Mount Carmel; a Norwegian composed the music; the Terraces were designed by the architect of India's Lotus Temple; and believers from every country contributed funds for the construction.
- Many attempts were made by clergy and rulers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to stamp out the spread of this new movement. The opening of the Terraces on Mount Carmel and the arrival of thousands of Bahá'ís representing a cross-section of the world's diverse peoples symbolize a remarkable story that no one imagined possible: the very existence of a human community capable of unifying groups previously divided by religion, race, class or education; a community where people cooperate rather than compete; where men and women function in equal partnership; where leaders are elected on merit rather than through power-struggles and campaigns; and where decisions are made and carried out with the full participation of those affected by them – proof that peace and justice are not only possible, but practical realities.
- The members of the delegations coming from each country may be the best story for the media. Highlight their diversity, the fact that they represent all regions or ethnic groups in your country, youth and elderly, women and men, and the fact that they are joining thousands of others from around the world to consecrate a holy place in Israel.
- Add a point about what Bahá'ís in your region are doing to implement Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a just and peaceful world order. Highlight your collaborative efforts with others to

promote human rights, the advancement of women, moral education, or social and economic development.

Attached is a sample press release that you should feel free to modify or adapt as necessary. Instead of trying to load the initial press release with more information about the Bahá'í Faith than most reporters can handle, it is helpful to place a "Note to the editor" which provides them with basic background information. You may also add a list of "bullet points" (such as those above) along with the release, to give reporters more ideas about other aspects of the story that might be interesting for their readers/listeners. Always provide contact names and addresses at the bottom or the top of the press release.

Attachment