

---

## Life at the Center

*A corporation is an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law. . . . By these means, a perpetual succession of individuals are capable of acting for the promotion of the particular object, like one immortal being.*

—CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN MARSHALL,  
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE V. WOODWARD, 1819

*Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue we know that it wounds.*

—MARY DOUGLAS

*Toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire. (Some things are better left unsaid.)*

—FRANTZ PÉRALTE MONESTIME,  
FOUNDER AND FIRST HMSC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“I didn’t want to talk to you.”

“I know,” I responded, relieved at completing an intense interview with Frantz Monestime about his life and reasons for cofounding the Haitian Multi-Service Center (the Center).<sup>1</sup> The conversation was difficult to arrange and almost didn’t take place. I had heard about Monestime, the Center’s first executive director (ca. 1982–86), from several stakeholders, but I’d had difficulty finding him. Some who united to establish the Center were no longer in Greater Boston. A few pioneers, as one founder called this group, had died. Others refused to talk about these early years or did not respond to my requests for information. Perhaps they were reluctant to revisit this history and had chosen to move on and not look back.

We met one evening in spring 2011 at Monestime’s office suite in a commercial area of suburban Boston. At first he was hesitant to sign a consent form indicating whether I could use his name, title, or direct quotations from the interview. To my surprise, his hesitation was neither solely about signing, nor telling his story, but rather about the institutions or persons I represented and my intentions: “Did you ever work for Catholic Charities? Who are you again? Why are you writing this

book?” I was unsure whether Monestime’s concerns stemmed from nervousness about the consent process, deeper ambivalence and, perhaps, antipathy toward the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (the Church) and area Catholic institutions, or a desire to control the interview process (maybe all three). I repeated much of my initial phone introduction, saying that I was not and had never been an employee of Catholic Charities (the Charity), but I had served on the HMSC Advisory Board, between 2005 and 2010 roughly, and was now writing the Center’s biography.

I told him I wanted to present the history as accurately as possible, but I needed these permissions in writing for clarity and to protect us both. His story, I said, was one of the most important pieces of a complicated organizational puzzle I had been attempting to assemble about the Church, the Charity, and the Center. He deliberated, pen poised in the air. Without his story in his own words, I said, the book would be inaccurate and incomplete. I knew there were disputes regarding how, when, and by whom the Center was founded. I wanted to uncover why there were discrepancies regarding these events.

With a deep sigh, he put pen to paper, releasing me to record his words, to identify him by name, and to quote directly from his speech. He told me he’d been asked many times before to do audio or visual interviews on his tenure at the Center, but he had never done so.<sup>2</sup> He was tremendously frustrated to hear and see the Center’s history reported incorrectly on the radio or in the newspaper, but had maintained silence, feeling he shouldn’t or couldn’t speak out.

“There are things maybe I should not tell you, too,” he said with heaviness. “There is a saying we have in Haiti: ‘Toute vérité n’est pas bonne à dire’ [Some things are better left unsaid—literally, Every truth is not good to say].” I affirmed it was up to him what he wanted to disclose, and he should just tell me as much as was comfortable. My job would be to tell the story as best I could.

“Ok. Let’s go.”

#### THE CHURCH, THE CHARITY, AND THE CENTER

Monestime was not present when, on September 25, 2003, nearly one hundred people gathered on a vacant, grassy Boston lot for a sign-unveiling ceremony announcing the site as the “Future Home of the Dorchester Community Service Center: A center responding to the needs and interests of our diverse community.” Located near the intersection of Columbia Road and Geneva Avenue, an area with high concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities and much smaller percentages of European Americans, the land had been described as “empty” and “unused” (Forry 2003).<sup>3</sup> For many neighborhood residents the parcel symbolized Boston’s neglect of its most vulnerable populations. The billboard listed a cast of characters involved in the service center project and diagrammed visually some of the intricate connections among Haitians, the Church, and affiliated Catholic



FIGURE 1. Sign unveiling for the Dorchester Community Service Center. Photo credit: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston, Inc.

charitable institutions, city, state, and federal government, public and private donors, and, through the charities, countless volunteers.

A Charity media photo capturing the sign and celebration participants further maps some of these public and private stakeholders (see Figure 1). Although the sign did not acknowledge Jean Yawkey (1909–92)—one of the former owners of the Boston Red Sox baseball team, whose foundation pledged five million dollars to complete the new ten million dollar building<sup>4</sup>—the names of local dignitaries were prominently displayed. Standing at the sign's left, Mayor Thomas M. Menino (1942–2014) was listed across from his counterpart in the Church, Archbishop Séan Patrick O'Malley, who stood at the billboard's immediate right.<sup>5</sup>

Established as a diocese in 1808 and attaining status as an archdiocese in 1875, by the early 2000s the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (RCAB—the Church) served nearly two million ethnically diverse Catholics in 290 parishes across 144 communities in eastern Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup> The archdiocese had educated approximately 42,000 students annually in its Catholic schools and 156,000 in religious education classes. Through pastoral and social service outreach, the Church had ministered to two hundred thousand individuals.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the archdiocese had aided nearly one million patients annually through its “health care ministry.”<sup>8</sup> Although Protestants have increasingly attracted Haitians in Haiti and the diaspora (Brodwin 1996, 2003; Conway 1978; Louis 2014; Richman 2005),

Haitians remain predominantly Catholic and send many children to Catholic schools (Jackson 2007).

Underneath the names of these state and church executives were those of their respective cabinet members: the African American civic leader, Charlotte Golar Richie, chief [of Housing] and director of neighborhood development in the mayor's office (not pictured), and South Boston native, Dr. Joseph Doolin, the first layperson to serve as archdiocesan cabinet secretary for social services (pictured next to Archbishop O'Malley).

Dr. Doolin also served as president of the Charity. Since its founding as a child welfare agency in 1903, the Catholic Charitable Bureau of the Archdiocese of Boston, Inc. had been a clearinghouse for Catholic social welfare in eastern Massachusetts. In the sign's lower left corner, the Charity's own trademark, a bright red heart enclosing a smaller black cross, was one of two color images. Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) reports that in 2009, 163 Catholic charities agencies in the United States served 9,164,981 (unduplicated) people through "food services" (food banks and pantries, soup kitchens, home delivered meals, etc.), "services that strengthen families" (counseling and mental health, immigration, refugee, pregnancy, addiction, and adoption programs), "services that build strong communities" (social support, education and enrichment, socialization and neighborhood services, and health-related services, especially to at-risk populations), "housing-related services" (temporary shelter, counseling and assistance, supervised living, permanent housing, and transitional housing), "basic assistance" (clothing, basic needs, utilities, emergency financial, and prescription assistance), and "disaster services."<sup>9</sup>

At the time, approximately 165 national Catholic charitable organizations offered humanitarian relief, economic development, and social services through a federation the Holy See authorizes called Caritas Internationalis.<sup>10</sup> The Church and affiliated Catholic social service agencies around the world presented their work as promoting life and providing support to persons in need "from cradle to grave."

At the heart of the sign was a striking architectural rendering of the proposed red and gold brick Yawkey Center through which the Church and the Charity would offer several social services. Listed at the sign's base, the childcare, adult education, employment and education, family services, and AIDS programs buttressed the church, state, and private sector actors named above them. An onlooker would not assume the Church had pledged funding for a new Haitian social service center. Most Haitians thought the new Dorchester building would be theirs, in the way the Archdiocese of Miami—in concert with Haitian civic leaders, volunteers, and parishioners—inaugurated the ten-acre Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church and the Pierre Toussaint Center in 1981 to offer Haitian newcomers economic, educational, legal, social, and spiritual support (Mooney 2009: 1–13).

In very small print, between the church and private sector stakeholders on the right of the sign, were names of two Charity programs that would occupy the new building. Since its birth, the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC—the Center),

established “by Haitians, for Haitians,” had helped refugees, immigrants, and the American-born poor to rebuild new lives. In 1978, Haitians founded the Center in Boston’s St. Leo Parish. Between 1986 and 1992, the Charity gradually assumed supervision when Cardinal Bernard Francis Law transferred the Center from direct administration by the Chancery, the archdiocese’s administrative offices (CCAB 1995: 19). In merging with the Charity, the Center was incorporated into the largest private social service network in Massachusetts with an annual operating budget of approximately forty million dollars spread across 140 social service programs.<sup>11</sup> Through the Charity, the Center became an affiliate of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), the largest private human services network in the United States, with an operating budget of approximately \$4.275 billion dollars, 67 percent of which was funded by government agencies.<sup>12</sup>

### FINDING THE CENTER

I became invested in the lives of Boston Haitians when, in spring 2005, “Dr. Taylor Smith,” a friend, mentor, and social scientist, nominated me to the Center’s advisory board, which she had served (unbeknownst to me) for nearly ten years. She offered to discuss with Pierre Imbert, its longest serving executive director, the new ethnographic research I hoped to conduct, and she thought an opportunity might open in Boston or with the Center with his support. Imbert and the HMSC Advisory Board approved my membership at their April meeting. My first board experience occurred at its June 2005 annual retreat. The staff and board members communicated hope, enthusiasm, and accomplishment as they prepared for the move into the new Yawkey Center. At the retreat I was appointed liaison between the board and other Boston Haitian nonprofits working to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities in the Haitian community. In December 2005, the HMSC began moving into the new building.

After five months circulating between the board and the Haitian social service network, I developed the strong sense that the Center epitomized an American success whose story should be told. In February 2006, with Imbert’s backing, I requested permission from the advisory board, Charity administrators, and Center staff to conduct ethnographic research onsite and to write the Center’s history. In June 2006, I received authorization and commenced volunteering. Between 2006 and 2007, I spent nearly fifteen months participating daily in programs, collecting staff members’ life histories, and conducting archival research. I volunteered in the adult education and elder psychosocial support programs and documented other health programs—an HIV/AIDS prevention program, *Sante Manman Se Sante Pitit* (Healthy Mother Healthy Child, SMSSP), and general education and health promotion activities. I interviewed more than sixty current and former stakeholders: Church leaders in the archdiocese of Boston, Charity employees and members of its board of trustees, Center staff and advisory board members, as well as other

community leaders. Between 2007 and fall 2010, I continued service on the advisory board (albeit less frequently), until an out-of-state move made participation unfeasible. From 2011 to 2016, I interviewed additional stakeholders, as I located them, about the Center's identity, culture, and connections to Catholic institutions.

Toward the end of my research, the hopefulness and pride shared collectively at the 2003 sign unveiling had taken a dramatic turn. By 2009, most long-term Center staff members had either been fired or had resigned. Many advisory board members left or limited their participation. Although archdiocesan community outreach intensified following the 2008 hurricanes and the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the Center no longer had its own executive director and was neither predominantly Haitian-managed nor independent. In 2017, Haitians publicly protested the closure of the last Center program prioritizing their community. At this writing, the former hub of the Massachusetts Haitian American community is a shell of itself and fully managed by Catholic Charities. What happened?

• • •

This book describes how public and private actors with distinct but complementary missions collaborated to help Haitian refugees and immigrants gain economic independence, health, security, and citizenship in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Beginning in the 1970s, Haitian professionals mobilized volunteers and resources to tackle their compatriots' challenges in the Boston area. From the 1980s to the late 1990s, their efforts, supported by Catholic institutions, produced a social service program offering new Haitian arrivals and long-standing impoverished residents various modes of social and civic incorporation. By the early 2000s, these same successes anchored an archdiocesan fundraising campaign for the establishment of a new Dorchester community service center. The interaction between the secular and religious stakeholders strengthened,<sup>14</sup> but also eroded, the independent organizational gains Haitians had made in response to their community's social, political, legal, economic, and health crises.

Thus, this ethnographic history also offers a postmortem assessment of the factors leading to the Center's apparent death. My use of clinical language is intentional and aims to unravel interwoven questions. Was the decline of the Center's corporate body "natural"—as in the life course of an organization—unintended, or deliberate? Does its fate reflect the psychosocial legacies of Haiti's turbulent past or other political and economic factors? Did the institution change too drastically from its founding mission, causing its constituents to rescind their support? Or has the Center transcended the limitations of its initial material form to become something else—fully incorporated within the Church's charity network?

It is important to acknowledge deeply held disputes whether the Center has, in fact, died. If I search for "Haitian Multi-Service Center" on the internet, the agency appears under education programs on the Charity website.<sup>15</sup> The archdiocesan weekly newspaper, the *Boston Pilot*, advertised the Center in 2022.<sup>16</sup> Although the HMSC name remains on the Yawkey Center building, the Center is no longer

semi-autonomous. Despite hopes for a new era in a new building, something has irrevocably changed. Many long-standing stakeholders argue what remains of the program now serving the Charity has lost its soul.

In telling this story, the book explores several paradoxes of aid relevant beyond this case: despite the best of intentions, and whether in the form of religious charity, humanitarian relief, sustainable development, or corporate social responsibility initiatives, charitable actors may inadvertently reproduce the social inequalities and power disparities between donors and recipients. A second paradox arises from the empirical investigation underlying this study: giving practices can generate power and social capital for the donor, even while the recipient benefits from aid. Third, the power and trust generated by aiding others—through bodily care, material support, education, and pastoral care, and so on—can create good will and loyalty but may deepen aid recipients' dependence. Finally, inequity in parties to charitable transactions can lead to resistance to organized benevolence, conflicts, and even abuse. Nevertheless, the same modes of charity or philanthropy that previously caused harm can be redeployed or promoted visibly to repair damage and rebuild "charitable brands."

This book suggests scholars, policymakers, and planners ask why, in the face of such paradoxes, do stakeholders remain faithful to or depart from mission-driven institutions perceived to have betrayed or harmed them? What processes sustain or wound stakeholders' faith in, and loyalty to, an organization? I refer to the constellation of such paradoxes using the concept of "corporate Catholicism."

### CORPORATE CATHOLICISM

**Corporate**, *adj.* and *adv.* /'kɔ:pərət/

a. United into one body. Embodied. Corpulent. Having a body. Material. Pertaining to or affecting the body. Of or belonging to a body politic, or corporation, or to a body of persons.

*n.* A large company, a corporation.

*v.* To form into a corporation or body politic; to incorporate.

**Corporate culture**, *n.* the ethos of a particular company, or that of large businesses in general; the approach a company takes towards the working environment of its staff.

**Corporate identity**, *n.* (a) *U.S.* status as a legally distinct incorporated company; (b) *orig. U.S.* a company's public image, esp. the use of a distinctive logo and coordinated packaging, etc., to aid product recognition.

—OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

The Center's biography suggests three main concepts to be developed across this book: corporate Catholicism, pastoral power, and the compassion economy (James 2010, 2012, 2019). Corporate Catholicism indexes the historical ways the Church and affiliated Catholic institutions have integrated others into the Church's "mystical body." The concept also signifies how religious bodies may construct

legal entities or facsimiles to engage the state, such as for property ownership. Corporate Catholicism is rooted in a faith-based vision of economy and society enacted in local moral worlds (Kleinman and Kleinman 1991). Nonetheless, Catholicism possesses a hierarchical corporate governance structure and a mobile regulatory system to (1) ensure compliance with canon law, (2) manage conflicts, (3) monitor the movement of people, finances, symbols, and information, and (4) administer property throughout its global network (Laguerre 2011: 24–28, 64–91). But as social theorist Michel S. Laguerre (2011: 22) argues, “Transglobal network government is not simply the public administration of a transnational organization, but it is also management of religious and moral values.”

The chapters of this book expand Laguerre’s notion of corporate network governance and draw on various definitions of the word “corporate” (from the Latin root *corpus, corporis* [body]) to inform the meanings of corporate Catholicism. “Corporate” refers to assemblages of persons united into one body, like a corporation; members of a body politic who are incorporated into, forced from, or excluded from a political body; the fleshly, corporal (or corporeal) and carnal nature of embodiment, which becomes an object of pastoral care; processes of legal incorporation (and the working conditions under which charity is enacted); and finally, the representational images associated with a corporation—its brand. In corporate Catholicism, charity, typically divided into corporal and spiritual “works of mercy” (Delany 1911), addresses the care needs of embodied individuals, but offers both donors and recipients opportunities to coproduce pastoral power.

“Pastoral power,” a power of care (Albahari 2015, 2019; Foucault 1982, 2007), facilitates corporate Catholic processes. Michel Foucault argues pastoral power is a “Christian” form of governance preceding (and undergirding) sovereign power, discipline, biopower, and governmentality in modern secular states (Foucault 1991, 2007). Although Foucault affirms, “Where there is power there is resistance” (1990: 95), he does not analyze resistances to pastoral power and presumes “pastors” hold greater power to compel obedience than may occur in practice. As this ethnographic history will later show, pastors confront corporeality and carnality in their flock (and in themselves) and may violate the ideals of the Catholic charitable brand.

## SANCTUARY

The Center’s natal home at St. Leo’s was roughly a mile south of the Columbia Road lot in Franklin Field—a Greater Boston neighborhood often depicted as a “hot spot” for gang violence, crime, drugs, sex work, and other social ills. The historic Victorian buildings the Center shared with the parish were dilapidated. Still, the site provided some shelter from environmental dangers and moral risks. In addition, the Center’s programs shielded clients from racial discrimination, economic and legal insecurities, educational and linguistic barriers, and hunger and ill health. These conditions greatly hampered their path to social and political incorporation in Boston, in Massachusetts, and in the United States (see Figure 2).



FIGURE 2. Haitian Multi-Service Center, main building, ca. 2004. Photo credit: Robert L. Powell.

The Center was an oasis for Haitian migrants establishing new lives in the United States. Haitians in Greater Boston likened it to Plymouth Rock (Forry 2006), Ellis Island (Manly 1994) and the Citadel (Stockman 2003), “the symbol of Haitian nationhood” (Bellegarde-Smith 2004: 44). King Henri Christophe built the citadel fort in northern Haiti between 1806 and 1820. The structure enabled the newly independent Republic of Hayti (1804) to ward off military incursions by foreign powers in the nineteenth century (Trouillot 1995). Haitians also compared the Center to the *lakou*, a spatial compound in Haiti where an extended family—including ancestral spirits and family Vodou spirits (*lwa* in Haitian Creole)—live, work together, and maintain cultural traditions across seen and unseen worlds.

Comparisons of the Center to iconic edifices, historic events, and complex sociocultural institutions indicate its importance to Haitians across Greater Boston and other transnational communities. Much like Alexis de Tocqueville’s nineteenth-century observations of civic associations, democracy, and citizenship in the United States,<sup>17</sup> the Center embodied an American ideal. Its spirit of tolerance, self-help, voluntarism, hospitality, reciprocity, and justice brought together populations from diverse class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds whose paths might not ordinarily have crossed.

Once the largest of a handful of Haitian social service organizations, the Center offered food and emergency relief, childcare and language classes, educational and health programs, refugee and immigration services, legal counseling, employment assistance, and other aid across Greater Boston. Like many programs sited in the

national Catholic Charities “movement”—an assemblage “committed to social transformation” whose mission stems from “roots in the Gospel and its Catholic identity and tradition” (Snyder 2010: 13)—its mandate has been to support families, promote community development, and assist immigrants in the struggle for social and economic self-sufficiency.

The Center embraced numerous stakeholders, including current and former clients, staff, and advisory board members; current and former Charity staff members and members of the Charity’s board of trustees; Catholic clergy, Haitian civic leaders, and the Greater Boston Haitian communities. Throughout my research there, its staff members asserted that the embattled former archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Bernard Francis Law, also found refuge at the Center.<sup>18</sup> The HMSC’s connection to the controversial cardinal was profound at times of crisis—whether in Haiti or in the archdiocese. The ultimate benefit of the Center’s connection to the cardinal remains in question and returns this analysis to the concept of pastoral power.

Pastoral power is produced and reproduced not only in the sacramental encounters between priests and the laity, but also through acts of caregiving (Kleinman 2009). In contemporary institutionalized charity, pastoral power is deployed not only toward the material and corporal, and moral and spiritual dimensions of life, but also to save the “secular soul”—an entity conjured through modern bureaucratic procedures (Foucault 1979; Fassin 2018; Povinelli 2006, 2011; Rose 1999). Pastoral care has been extended, and sometimes exchanged, between the Charity, the Center, and their respective staff members and clients, as well as between these organizations and the Greater Boston Haitian community (among others). I aim to show in this book how pastoral power occurs along a continuum: ranging from compassionate care, correction, and discipline to troubling situations producing what I call “negative charisma,” including exploitation and abuse. Pastoral power emerges, is reinforced, and resisted in corporate Catholic settings.

Corporate Catholicism also interacts with the compassion economy: finite flows of beneficent material resources, knowledge and expertise, technologies, therapies, and other forms of aid circulating between an aid apparatus and its clients and between the aid apparatus and donors (James 2010, 2019). This apparatus, a powerful transnational network of mobile humanitarian and development actors, “governs” clients through social services provided in place or on behalf of fragile or failing states (James 2010, 2011, 2012, 2019). Such an economy aims to mitigate crises, promote sustainable development, and empower populations identified as in need of intervention. Although the temporal, structural, and political contexts undergirding corporate Catholicism and the compassion economy may differ, there are similarities between the secular aid I observed in Haiti and the faith-based practices I witnessed in the United States, including disputes regarding how (and to whom) benevolence circulates.

How do individuals and institutions confront suffering, offer social rehabilitation, and facilitate migrant incorporation through faith-based charity? In addition

to incorporation models based on ethnic or national identity, there are other possibilities of inclusion as members of “networks of social relations through which an individual or an organized group of individuals becomes linked to an institution recognized by one or more nation-states” (Glick Schiller, Çağlar, and Guldbrandsen 2006: 614; see also O’Neill 2010; Ong 1999 and 2003). The Church, one such network of social relations, also operates as a nation-state. Within Catholic theology, charity comprises “merciful” spiritual and corporal works intended to shelter, feed, heal, educate, administer, and even “save” diverse bodies, minds, and souls (Delany 1911).<sup>19</sup> As a human services network, public and private grants, material resources, technical expertise, social and political capital, and individual acts of pastoral care also flow through the Catholic compassion economy.

Because neoliberal secular states continue to retrench entitlements and social welfare, affiliation with faith-based organizations (FBOs) offering services on behalf of the government can provide alternative paths to persons seeking civic inclusion. Territorial institutions like the Vatican City-State, the Holy See, and the universal Church, and hybrid public-private charitable entities like the Charity and the Center, operate through forms of “network governance” (Laguerre 2011) offering their members opportunities for sociopolitical incorporation. These institutions can ease paths to citizenship in nation-states. In focusing on a primary location, the Center, I follow Çağlar and Glick Schiller’s (2018: 11) work on migrants, city-making, and a multiscalar method that “situates urban actors within various networks of power.” An ethnographic focus on a single site requires multiscalar scholarship to acknowledge that “no site can be understood apart from its interconnections through time and space, and these interconnections can be studied in a single site.”

A postmortem assessment of the Center shows how a Catholic compassion economy provides means of migrant incorporation in partnership with, but at times, in opposition to, the state.<sup>20</sup> Over its history the Center’s engagements with entities like the Church, the Charity, and the City, as well as public and private donors, compelled staff members to improvise continually to best serve their clients. In documenting the charitable practices of everyday life (Certeau 1984), I emphasize the historical and global heterogeneity of Catholic compassion economies. In part, following Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), this book documents what could be called “A Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.” In the Archdiocese of Boston, the charity extended to Haitians has been symbolically rich as an index of the Church’s institutional accountability. The story of the Center is not only an allegory about how power flows in Catholic and faith-based institutions; it also offers a cautionary tale for other voluntary and private sector corporations seeking to preserve their brands during processes of institutional transformation.

But what happens when faith-based organizations (FBOs) lose pastoral power or moral legitimacy? The Center’s history parallels events occurring in the American Catholic Church—namely, a decline in laity and clergy attrition, especially

in response to institutional betrayals. “Secularization” processes and the bureaucratization of everyday charitable life have fomented disenchantment with both Church and Center practices (Asad 1993, 2003; Certeau 1984; Hirschkind and Scherer 2011; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Taylor 2007; Weber 1946). However, this “corporate ethnography” of the Center (Benson and Kirsch 2010) offers a parable not only for Catholic but also religious *and* secular nonprofit corporate entities espousing a principled mission (i.e., those advocating for human rights, civil rights, women’s rights, humanitarianism, etc.). The Center may even symbolize how external actors have treated Haiti itself.

### CENTERING LIFE

At the unveiling ceremony, most stakeholders considered the barren field a “promised land.” Deliverance from the decaying but beloved St. Leo buildings was imminent. Although many Haitians felt the modern building would represent the community’s social and political recognition, the proposed move caused considerable debate—even reopening superficially healed psychosocial wounds inflicted previously in Haiti, endured on journeys to America, and received in Massachusetts.

Relocating required the Center to share the new building. The Charity’s largest community service program, Greater Boston Catholic Charities (GBCC, also known as Catholic Charities/Greater Boston), was the second program listed on the sign. GBCC linked historically to the Charity’s founding a century earlier. In 1999, GBCC established the Greater Boston Community Service Center in Uphams Corner, about a mile north. The satellite program offered adoption and counseling services to pregnant women and families seeking to adopt, psychosocial support to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families, at-risk youth services, a food pantry, and other assistance.

The Charity hoped to consolidate services offered by the Haitian Multi-Service Center and Uphams Corner programs in the new building (Robinson and Stephen Kurkjian 2002). Although a faith-linked position strengthened the Center’s fiscal and infrastructural stability, when Center stakeholders attempted to address Haitians’ complex needs in previous years, the Church, the Charity, and the Center clashed regarding how best to do so. Archdiocesan attempts to combat HIV/AIDS (and high maternal and infant mortality rates) by advocating sexual abstinence rather than contraceptive use provoked contentious public conflicts among these institutions. The Charity even sought to reduce the Center’s autonomy. These disagreements, prioritizing differing conceptions and practices of “life,” suggested Haitian pragmatism in promoting livelihoods, human rights, health, and dignity deliberately challenged Catholic theologies of life, sex, and the body.

By documenting another sense of life, the Center’s biographical history and everyday life, I witnessed a community-based advocacy organization undergoing changes to its corporate identity. Could the Center uphold Catholic moral tenets

while meeting the requirements of public and private donors “outside” the Church—funders who expected programs to promote best practices in medicine and public health? Was it primarily intended to serve Haitians or a broader client base? At the heart of these questions were recurrent struggles over whether the Center was primarily “Catholic” and fully incorporated into the Church’s mystical body, or secular, “Haitian,” and only affiliated with Catholic institutions until it became self-sustaining. In short, how would the Center promote life, and whose lives mattered?

#### CARDINAL LAW AND CHURCH CONTRADICTIONS

The sign-unveiling celebration highlighted the entangled relationships among religious and governmental agencies, voluntary and private sector corporations, and the communities the new Dorchester service center would support. Although the building project demonstrated accountability to their respective (and sometimes overlapping) constituents, a shared religious identity as Catholics linked many participants. Corporate Catholicism had played a positive historical role by aiding migrants and the poor in establishing new lives in the United States. In so doing, the Church and Catholic charities had accumulated tremendous religious and civic power.

Under a large white tent near a towering maple tree, the ceremony’s mood was initially formal and solemn, but then celebratory, resembling a wedding or other occasions bringing families and friends together. This union was between church and state, private businesses, and nonprofit actors representing local communities. Behind a wooden podium bearing Boston’s blue and white seal stood Mayor Menino, State Senator Jack Hart, State Representative Martin (“Marty”) J. Walsh—a future Boston mayor and U.S. secretary of labor—and the first Haitian state representative in Massachusetts, Marie St. Fleur.

Around the pavilion perimeter were prominent Catholics who played significant roles in this story: Archbishop O’Malley stood next to Dr. Doolin and members of the CCAB Board of Trustees. Dr. Roger Jean-Charles, a Haitian physician who once served as chairman of the HMSC Advisory Board, had worked with the archdiocese to aid his compatriots in the United States and abroad. Close to the trustees stood a charismatic Haitian American who had shepherded the building project from conception to fruition, Center executive director Pierre Imbert. Both Jean-Charles and Imbert were present in November 2000 when Cardinal Law made an impactful pastoral visit to the Center to assess its needs (see Figure 3). An observer of the meeting reported:

[Cardinal Law] had come to the Haitian Center himself and shared bread with us and lunch . . . to sort of bear witness to the conditions of the buildings and engage with the brothers and sisters, clients of the Haitian Center. . . . This is a cardinal that

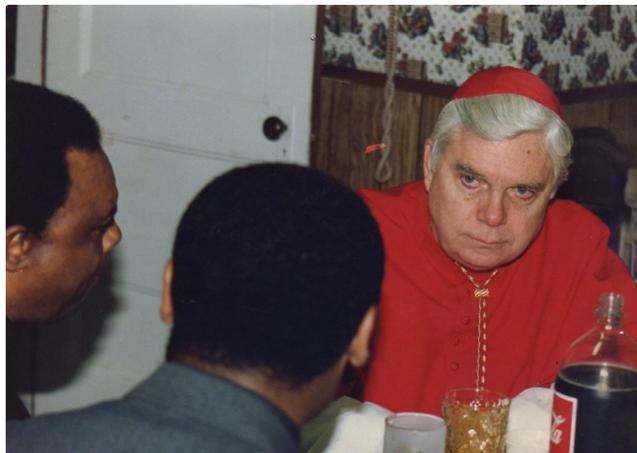


FIGURE 3. Cardinal Law visits St. Leo Parish. Photo credit: Robert L. Powell.

did good things for the immigrant population [that] enhanced the strong support that he'd received until the end from the immigrant community of Boston, and particularly from the Haitian community, with which he engaged as a Church leader so closely and so much. I think it was a, it was a very positive relationship.

Law's encounter with the Haitian children in the daycare was particularly moving. Another witness said: "I was really touched . . . when he visited the daycare . . . it was some time in November . . . the kids, they were kind of amazed to see . . . a man with a robe . . . black with the red [sash] . . . and then with the royal cap. He was sitting in those little chairs with the kids." That a "prince" of the Church treated Haitian children with kind regard and equality was considered remarkable. Cardinals were only subject to a pope's authority. The witness continued,

and there was one thing that happened. . . . One of the kids was playing with the [Cardinal's] ring . . . and one of the kids said to him, "Do you have a mother?" And that was on the anniversary of the death of the Cardinal's mother. . . . The people from the . . . Elder Program had a special program for him. They sung . . . for him and [gave] him food—this was the . . . national [dish]—the rice and beans . . . with . . . *griyo* [fried pork], and *banann peze* [fried plantains]—so he sat down and ate with everyone, and he had a tour of the building, and he saw the conditions.

A former Center employee present at the time said, "At the end he pledged then and there that . . . he *will* rebuild, he will help rebuild the Haitian Center because the conditions of the building were so miserable. . . . the Cardinal had a transformation that happened to him right then and there and he made that pledge."

Cardinal Law next attended the February 2001 Charity board of trustees meeting to propose a new building for the Haitian community. In May 2001,

the Center was featured in the archdiocese's \$325 million capital campaign. The same Center employee said:

Cardinal Law very soon thereafter built a case for the entire archdiocese which . . . which directly included the Haitian Center. . . . The Haitian Center and the Labouré Center [a Charity social service center in South Boston] happened to be perhaps the only two centers directly named in . . . the subsequent launch of a \$325 million capital campaign. And the Haitian Center—a case was built for the Haitian Center for five million dollars from the capital campaign.

When Law's role in the clergy sexual abuse scandal emerged early the following year, the news provoked widespread calls for his ouster and severely hampered the capital campaign. But among Haitian Catholics there remained overwhelming support for Law and loyalty to the Church, perhaps for which the new space was a reward.

Throughout this project I was continually surprised to hear from Haitians (and others) about Cardinal Law's support to their community at critical junctures. Repeatedly I had to reconcile the duality of what I learned. Stories of his public benevolence and solidarity with Afro-Caribbean and Latin American populations, especially their children, contrasted with revelations of private actions he had taken to conceal (and therefore enable) the clerical abuse of other youths. Such negative disclosures sometimes coincided temporally with his public advocacy for vulnerable children. Cardinal Law was not the only leader in a Catholic institution to embody this paradox.

I also sought to understand how conceptions of race and racism may have influenced the extension or denial of charity toward Haitians (and others). But another set of questions connects to "whose lives matter?" How are we to understand individuals (and institutions) whose practices are both benevolent and merciful—fostering economic empowerment, social incorporation, political recognition, and justice—while these same individuals (and institutions) act in ways that strip others of their innocence, dignity, and bodily integrity, all in the name of charity? Are such contradictions embedded in all institutions or are mission-driven organizations particularly vulnerable to the erosion of their moral and ethical cultures?

#### THE CHURCH AND THE CITY

Other steadfast Center stakeholders spoke at the 2003 sign unveiling. Next to Imbert were members of the HMSC Advisory Board, including the ceremony's final speaker, Mr. Robert L. Powell, an African American Catholic and one of Boston's first Black firefighters. Powell had aided the organization since its founding. On either side of a center aisle sat Center staff members and clients, municipal

employees, Charity social service program representatives, and neighborhood residents. Sitting in the first row were four beautiful Haitian children who were acknowledged in speeches several times and became the subject of media photos (see Figure 1).

The assemblage resembled a political rally. Civic leaders jubilantly called out the names of staff and other politicians using the cadences of campaign speech. Reminiscent of religious services to consecrate a space or bless a new endeavor, some speakers proclaimed their religious identity and motives for service. Above the clamor of delivery trucks, municipal sirens, and car horns, Charlotte Golar Richie emceed with a resounding voice. The former state representative proclaimed, “This is a special day, a very, very special day for Dorchester and for the City of Boston! . . . Change is coming! Change is coming to this long vacant property. That’s a really good thing. Where we’re gathered right now, it’s going to be a different place a year from now and we’re all here to celebrate the future development of this site.” Golar Richie next introduced Archbishop O’Malley and lauded his facility with Dorchester’s numerous languages and cultures.

After thanking the mayor and Charity president, O’Malley praised the Center in his renowned sonorous voice: “We know the . . . great needs of this neighborhood, and we know that this new center will house the Haitian Center and be available for all the needs of the community, for the various and diverse communities that are here—the Cape Verdeans, the Hispanics, Vietnamese, African Americans, everybody in this neighborhood.” As the congregation bowed their heads, O’Malley’s prayed the first section of Psalm 127 in his benediction, “If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor.” Although unspoken, the completing verse, “if the Lord does not watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil,” implicitly reminded participants that God’s blessing was required for the building’s success and the City’s security. O’Malley petitioned, “We pray for the help of God that this project will be brought to successful completion, that all who will work here will be kept safe, and that we will gather together again to celebrate the new gift to the people of this city and this neighborhood. And we ask this and all prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Subsequent speakers underscored the historical roles of Catholic charities in public and private development and in incorporating migrants into the city, state, and nation. Calling the land and future community service center “an oasis for the new people in our city . . . looking for hope and opportunity,” Mayor Menino acknowledged Boston’s debt to the Church. After crediting the Charity for launching the initiative, he likened the proposed building to “a settlement house for people coming for services—ESL programs, afterschool programs, services that are needed [for] . . . ‘the new Bostonians’ . . . people who represent the diversity of our communities.” The mayor continued:

This has to be the multi-service center for the community—especially for the Haitian community. . . . As we have the new population come to Boston, we have to make sure that we welcome you and give you the services [for you to feel that] “Boston is the city [where] we want to stay and bring up [our] children,” [like those] we have right here in front of me [referring to the four Haitian children seated in the front row of the audience]. This will be part of the renaissance of this neighborhood.

After mentioning other recent municipal projects to “renew” the surrounding vicinity—two senior housing units and a brand-new middle school a few blocks north on Columbia Road—the mayor’s final remarks to O’Malley drew thunderous applause: “I just want to say to the archbishop, thank you for being in Boston. Thank you for [what you are doing] for our Church. That means so much to so many of us.” Others thanked O’Malley for “bringing our Catholic community together,” and, implicitly, for beginning to heal its corporate wounds.

#### WOUNDS OF CHARITY

Catholics still reel from the disclosure of Cardinal Law’s direct involvement in clergy sex abuse cases in previous decades. Although, in the 1990s, the local media covered reports of pedophile priests, the January 2002 *Boston Globe* exposé charged Law with concealing such cases, transferring pedophile priests to other parishes, and denying knowledge of their egregious acts. The scandal shattered the trust and legitimacy the Church had earned in Massachusetts and eroded the legal immunity its officials had previously enjoyed internationally. In May 2002, Law became the first American cardinal “compelled to testify under oath in a lawsuit in which he was a named defendant” (Lawler 2010: 179). Lay and clerical groups repeatedly called for his resignation. On December 13, 2002, after consulting with Pope John Paul II, Law became the first cardinal to resign for his role in abuse cases. When similar crimes were acknowledged in multiple North American dioceses, as well as internationally, Boston became the epicenter of sexual scandal in the universal Church—a disaster still traumatizing victims globally that may have damaged the Catholic charitable brand irreparably.

In the wake of the ongoing scandal and resulting membership retrenchment, the Dorchester land acquisition and construction plan symbolized the Boston Church’s partial emergence from disgrace. The ecclesial real estate holding expansion was also significant because the archdiocese suffered long-standing decreases in both parishioners and men and women religious—the priests and religious sisters who originally staffed parishes and other Catholic institutions.<sup>21</sup> Such losses contributed to the closure and divestiture of Catholic schools, hospitals, and other archdiocesan properties. The aging of the clergy, and the conversion of many Catholics to Evangelical Protestantism (or away from organized religion

altogether), were additional factors contributing to the Roman Catholic Church's decline in the United States (O'Connor 1998; Seitz 2011).

Boston's Haitian Catholics were already deeply aware of these attrition processes. In 1999, the archdiocese "suppressed" (decommissioned) St. Leo Church and merged the faithful into Dorchester's St. Matthew Parish. Although the community lost a focal point of Haitian piety, St. Leo's buildings were "relegated to profane use" and given to the Center for its growing programs. And as is now known, Haitian children were among those wounded by clergy sexual abuse. In June 2002, publicized legal documents showed the Church received numerous complaints against one specific priest, Rev. Paul J. Mahan. Mahan reputedly had "kissed and molested Haitian boys" while serving at St. Matthew's (Cardinal Law removed him from the priesthood in 1998).<sup>22</sup> After this revelation, the prominent focus placed on Haitian children at the sign-unveiling ceremony was dense with additional meaning. To them was given a promise of care and protection, and perhaps, institutional reparations.

#### CHURCH AND STATE

Given these fissures in the Church's moral, social, and material foundations, the unveiling celebration was a civic achievement. In exchange for the land, the new community service center gift fulfilled Catholics' religious obligation to perform charity as individuals and as a corporate body. The building represented philanthropic capital and, perhaps, an act of corporate penance demonstrating to the city and community the Church's contrition, continued relevance, and moral legitimacy. Dr. Doolin, who was scheduled to retire at the end of 2003 (Abel 2003), spoke about the building's significance:

In closing, just, just a couple of words about one aspect of why this building is important. . . . This project is a sign of the Church's *will* to continue to be a presence in Boston's neighborhoods. . . . You cannot judge an institution solely by its mistakes—you really have to look at the whole record—and the whole record of the Church in Boston is the tradition . . . of including service to people, helping waves of newcomers acculturate and become part of society, educate people, provide social services, [and] provide healthcare.

Although tacitly acknowledging the ethics scandals, his words invoked the Church's historical role as a force for good. Doolin's stress on the Catholic "will" to serve highlighted the state's dependence on Church missions to incorporate people, and perhaps, "to 'manage' or 'pacify' . . . populations" through care or "a pedagogy of conversion intended to transform 'unruly subjects' into lawful subjects" (Das and Poole 2004: 9).

The relationships between care, conversion, discipline, and governance emerge throughout this book. Although contemporary Catholic charities do not proselytize

clients explicitly, the Church's caring mission enlivens adherents' shared Catholic identity. State Representative St. Fleur stated, "As a Roman Catholic who truly believes in the work of the Church . . . I celebrate Catholic Charities. . . . Second to the state, Catholic Charities is the largest provider of assistance to low-income families in the state and that is something to be really recognized and supported."

The final speaker, Mr. Powell (as he was commonly called), first acknowledged the Charity as an agent of community development then affirmed the Center as a partner in the labor to care for Greater Boston's souls. After describing the new building as the culmination of a dream, he pledged Center staff and advisory board members to working with the Charity to serve a broader client base than Haitians:

The Haitian Center, in concert with Catholic Charities, anticipates a substantially expanded program base at the new building, serving Haitians and welcoming the diverse community in the surrounding neighborhoods. . . . The Haitian Center will continue to offer childcare, adult education, including ESL, employment and job development services, health and life skills education, and prenatal care. But we will also offer new programs which will appeal to our broader service population.

Not all Center supporters agreed. Some prominent Haitian activists speculated publicly that the proposed move was a corporate takeover: "Apparently people were led to believe this is their project, and they later found out, no, it is a Catholic Charities project." Instead of the pride Haitians felt in having their freestanding Center, this individual continued, "where their language is understood and their culture respected," the move to the new building was "the difference . . . between owning and renting their own home, and they fear Catholic Charities will be more likely to take the lead in programs and services" (Paige 2003).

Some fears appeared justified (and time seems to have borne out the truth of these statements). After the September 2003 unveiling ceremony, the derelict St. Leo's rectory was condemned. The Charity attempted to shift some Center programs to the Greater Boston Uphams Corner space (and management) and to transfer Pierre Imbert to a fundraising position in Charity headquarters. Fearing such a move would erode their institutional identity and autonomy, Center staff opted to consolidate most programs in the Victorian home (see Figure 2) until the Yawkey Center's completion. These would not be the only struggles to preserve the Center's independence, identity, and mission. But in 2003, these difficulties lay in the future.

#### SEARCHING FOR LIFE

From previous work, I knew the Center's critical importance to Haitians seeking to *chèche lavi* (Haitian Creole for "search for life or a livelihood"). Recurrent political repression had provoked waves of citizens to flee their homeland. Under the repressive dictator François ("Papa Doc") Duvalier (1957–71), some middle-class Haitians had sought safety and economic opportunity in the United States. Years

of egregious human rights abuses perpetrated under “President-for-Life” Jean-Claude (“Baby Doc”) Duvalier (1971–86), compelled thousands of disadvantaged Haitians to flee. Many of these asylum seekers were detained in prison-like facilities while their legal claims were pending. The majority were ultimately repatriated to Haiti.

The largest exodus commenced in the early 1990s. On September 30, 1991, a military apparatus still loyal to the Duvaliers ousted former priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president, then brutally subjugated the poor pro-democracy sector until an international military intervention in October 1994. Through therapeutic and ethnographic work with survivors of political violence (1995–2000), I learned how the military regime, civilian attachés, and local gangs collaborated to disappear, torture, rape, and murder men and women *militan* (activists) struggling for democracy, human rights and health, education, and economic justice.

More than three hundred thousand Haitians went into hiding inside their nation. Thousands escaped on foot to the Dominican Republic and were subjected to racial discrimination and exploitative labor conditions (Martinez 1995). Others chartered rickety boats across perilous seas pursuing sanctuary. U.S. Coast Guard cutters interdicted tens of thousands at sea then incarcerated them in camps on Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Again, the majority were repatriated, much as their compatriots had been in the 1980s (see Chapter 3). A small minority of returnees would join select *militan* in becoming “beneficiaries” of a few “victim rehabilitation” assistance programs operating in the aid apparatus.

During this early fieldwork, I wondered whether Haiti’s experience as the “Republic of NGOs” represented a global phenomenon—namely, the privatization of social welfare. How had Haitians coped with the psychosocial aftermath of trauma in the diaspora? Had they been able to find political, economic, social, and spiritual security in the United States? If they were subjected to political persecution prior to leaving, would their psychosocial experiences resemble those of individuals who either were not able to leave Haiti or who chose to remain and necessarily endured cycles of *ensekirite* (Haitian Creole for insecurity) in subsequent years?<sup>23</sup> What forms of insecurity existed for Haitians in the United States, especially in the post-9/11 era?

#### FAITH-BASED CHARITY AND THE SECURITY STATE

Alongside anthropologies of the practice of Christianity (Cannell 2006) and Catholicism (Norget, Napolitano, and Mayblin 2017), there has been increased interest in religious philanthropy in recent years (Albahari 2015, 2019; Besteman 2016, 2019; Bornstein 2005, 2012; Bornstein and Redfield 2010; Caldwell 2004, 2017; Clark 2004; Elisha 2011; Ghodsee 2010; Huang 2009; James 2011, 2019; McAlister 2013;

Muehlebach 2012, 2013; Zigon 2011). Many studies document the role of religion in aiding immigrants to maintain transnational social networks and become incorporated into receiving nation-states (Alba, Raboteau, and DeWind 2009; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002; Mooney 2009; Napolitano 2016). Contemporary literature on U.S.-based religious nonprofits has focused on their advocacy for immigrant rights (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018; Coutin 1995; Stepick, Rey, and Mahler 2009) and the creation of “cultural citizenship” for immigrant Others (Ong 1996; Rosaldo 1994). Other studies interpret donors’ or volunteers’ motivations to labor charitably as processes of “moral selving” (Allahyari 2000), efforts to “save” both donors and recipients, and to reenchant capitalism (Weber 1930; see also James 2019).

Although social theories of secularization posit a decline in the temporal power of religious institutions in the modern West, Catholic corporate entities have partnered with federal, state, and municipal government for centuries, raising questions about whether there has been a fully secular moment (particularly in the United States). In this light, recent debates about the so-called “resurgence” of public religion in the current “postsecular” moment must be reconsidered (Beaumont and Baker 2011; Berger 1999; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and VanAntwerpen 2011; Cloke and Williams 2018: 42–44; Greed 2020). Regardless of recent temporal characterizations of (organized) civic piety, there are few analyses examining the practices of everyday charitable life in American Catholic agencies or how their practices have changed over time.

The example of the Church, Charity, and Center shows how religious nonprofit corporations can be inextricably linked to secular government, especially when the welfare state declines. In the contemporary United States, Catholic influence on domains ranging from social services to education, healthcare, and immigration grew over the twentieth century, in part because of foundational principles in Catholic social teachings. J. Bryan Hehir (2000: 102–8), Jesuit scholar and current secretary of health and social services in the Archdiocese of Boston, identifies solidarity, socialization, and subsidiarity as fundamental concepts informing the relationships among economy, society, and state. The moral principle of solidarity defines personhood as social and entails mutual obligations to ensure the “common good” through care, concern, and protection of others. Citing Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, Hehir (2000: 104) defines socialization as “the multiplication of social relationships, that is, a daily more complex interdependence of citizens, introducing into their lives and activities many and varied forms of associations, recognized for the most part in private and even in public law.” As social relationships increase in complexity and interconnectivity, there are moral consequences from the interpersonal to the international levels.

Although public intervention may be required to fulfill socioeconomic needs and protect human rights and dignity, the subsidiarity principle promotes

private, interpersonal, or local responses to preserve “freedom,” whether of individuals or corporate persons. Only if necessary should more complex private and then public interventions commence. A 2011 interview with an archdiocesan leader further clarified Catholic perspectives on private charity and public entitlements:

*ECJ:* One of the questions that I’m wondering about is . . . this term, “subsidiarity” . . . I’m still not getting it.

*AL:* . . . It’s based on the Latin word “subsidium,” which means help. . . . And . . . the principle begins by saying that when you have a social question, you should start at the most local level to solve it. Another way to say it is don’t go to the state first. . . . But if you find that the nature of the problem is larger than you can solve at the lowest level, you keep going up the social ladder to get to the point where you can hit the right balance between the state and civil society. . . . So, it starts as a conservative statement but in fact it moves from that to an argument that the state has a positive role.

Andrea Muehlebach’s (2013) ethnographic work on neoliberalism in Italy offers an example of a more “conservative” approach. She argues the neoliberal “Catholicization” of public policy has encouraged the privatization of social welfare and state conscription of NGOs to provide social services. At the same time, the Italian state promotes individual giving as an ethos of civic participation—especially citizen voluntarism grounded in Catholic theologies of love, and giving without an expected return gift (Muehlebach 2013: 459).

Under such conditions, the relationship between aid providers’ and recipients’ ethical statuses is critical to analyze. Muehlebach (2013: 461) argues, “Contemporary neoliberalism’s moral style, like Catholicism’s . . . consists of ‘cycle[s] of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin.’” Volunteers are compelled to give freely as a component of solidarity with the exploited and dispossessed but also to expiate their own sins “through worldwide commitments to charity and philanthropy” (462). However, “these acts of redemption . . . require an Other dependent on and willing to receive our gifts and thus capable of operating as a vehicle for consolation”; thus, the vulnerable poor become “objects of love, not subjects of justice” (462). Whether charity as love is necessarily in opposition to justice is explored throughout this book.

The role of Catholic charity in mediating between racial, ethnic, and impoverished Others and states, and between charity recipients and Catholics, has been political, even biopolitical. Charitable labor not only fulfills religious obligations to care for and potentially transform others, it may also be a form of individual and institutional penance. Providing charity to stigmatized populations may also balance or mitigate negative perceptions of an individual’s or institution’s self-presentation, of their brand. As this ethnographic history of Haitians and

corporate Catholicism progresses, I explore whether redemptive charity requires a dependent and receptive Other.

“[A] POPULATION THAT MOST PEOPLE  
DON’T WANT TO TOUCH”

A May 2007 interview with a Charity employee illustrates how the perceived worth of recipients influences the practice of charity, and how giving can confer merit on the charitable donor, whether individual or organizational. This individual asserted that the tragic events of September 11, 2001, provoked donor reluctance to contribute to institutions serving migrants, especially those of African descent. Stereotypes about charity recipients as unworthy or threatening deepened institutional and individual reticence to aid the “stranger among us” (NCCB/USCC 2000), regardless of background (see also Besteman 2016, 2019):

It’s gotten so much worse after 9/11 and people don’t take the time to listen and to want to be educated. . . . I mean it’s tough. I mean, we used to, during the Kosovo refugee crisis, we raised like a million dollars, but see, those are White refugees, right? We go to conferences, and the lone Sudanese person stands up and says, “Why aren’t you fighting for my people? Why isn’t [anybody] listening to us? But there’s a lack of will, you know. “Oh, that’s Africa—leave them be.” You know? I mean you hear some of the most horrific things, and you know it’s not right . . . and it’s racism. . . . You know, it’s so difficult, like even within our own network. Some Catholic . . . Charities agencies are resisting . . . resettling Africans!

As we spoke, the disjuncture between the brands organizations and corporations promote publicly and their “off-stage” practices was brought into relief (Shryock 2004).

The staff person affirmed the Charity mission aligned with their personal sense of vocation and then emphasized the obligation to support the Catholic mission to welcome the stranger and incorporate those deemed “undesirable,” regardless of required sacrifices (Agier 2011):

This is one part of my faith that I am really proud of. I’m proud that we do this. I’m proud that Catholic Charities, especially in Boston, and I can’t stress enough how supportive this archdiocese is with immigrants and refugees . . . Because after 9/11, a lot of dioceses said “Nope. We don’t want this. It’s too difficult. It’s too hot. We don’t want it. It bleeds money. We don’t want it.” But, you know, time and again, even as . . . every year [we] come in with a budget that’s, WELL, not balanced! [laughing], [we’re] reminded that this is the mission, simple as that, this is the mission.

This strong sense of personal and institutional vocation and identity relates directly to theologies of solidarity and care for society’s neediest through local and private action before involving governmental intervention.

Charity permits Catholics to demonstrate their vocation or “charism” (a spiritual gift or talent from God that is also a sign of grace). Such work implicitly influences the “economy of salvation” and, as Foucault puts it, the “economy of merits and faults” (1982, 2007). The term “economy” connotes management of exchanges among obligated parties, whether in social, material, financial, or spiritual realms. The Catholic sense of a salvation economy or a “divine economy” reflects a covenantal relationship between God and members of God’s household through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the sacramental practices of the corporate Church. Offering charity to certain populations yields salvific merit or reward. Populations considered “the least of these” (Mt 25:40)—the poor, the vulnerable migrant, the orphan, the widow, the homeless, the sick—are in many ways the select (Mt 20:16, “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen.”). By caring for them, one “encounters” Jesus Christ and may come closer to salvation (Mt 25:40: “Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me.”).

We continued discussing the Charity’s challenges, especially how large donors withheld support from Catholic institutions to protest the clergy sex abuse crisis. The proposed solution to reenchant donors showed how charity donors and recipients’ identities and moral statuses influence the ebbs and flows in compassion economies:

Just by sharing our experiences helps a lot. . . . Sharing the rich history that this particular diocese has with the Haitian population is going to speak volumes for us. We need to highlight the great work that happened many, many years ago, *to reach out to a population that most people don’t want to touch*. I mean, how many charities have a Haitian Center?

Advertising charity provided to outcast or marginalized groups was a strategy to counter the negative image Catholicism had earned after the scandal. However, it was not clear if “touch” meant physical or social contact, material aid, or organized management. I argue these actions (and others) circulate pastoral power in the Catholic compassion economy.

Fundamentally, Catholic charity involves willingness to contact directly, even physically, the “woundedness” of so-called Others, especially when such populations embody what is feared, denigrated, or maligned. Interpreting the significance of touch requires a deeper analysis of corporality. In a “Catholic sensorium” individuals can “perceive extraordinary presence that inheres in the material environment” (Mitchell 2017, 213). In this sensorium, the body can be porous and “pick up the presence of the Holy, as distributed in the environment” (Mitchell 2017, 213). Touching sacred relics and religious icons may impart “grace.” Grace is a free gift of a benevolent “otherworldly force or originary substance that sets things in motion [and] bears a family resemblance to ethnographic concepts like *mana* or *hau*”

(Pitt-Rivers [1992] 2017, 52–53).<sup>24</sup> But majority populations have not always perceived raced and gendered persons as having equal capacity to embody, merit, receive, or impart grace. Valentina Napolitano's (2017, 244) work on Latin American migrants in Rome describes how participation in a lay Catholic brotherhood enables "gendered migrant bodies [to be] invested with a *Catholic officium* (in the sense of being invested with an office related to liturgy)." An outcast man conscripted to help carry the Lord of Miracles statue was transformed by physical contact with the emblem of grace and by inclusion among the faithful. Physical contact with the sacred can convey mercy, worthiness, and uplift migrants' moral statuses.

A Catholic sensorium can regulate licit and illicit touch. Jon P. Mitchell (2017, 213), an anthropologist of Catholicism and politics in Malta, provides another understanding relevant for this analysis: "In Catholicism, the body can also be entered by the forces of good or evil, but this porousness extends beyond the straightforward vulnerability of the body to spiritual incursion." While contact with sacred persons or objects can confer mercy and healing, persons or objects considered either materially or spiritually threatening may harm. I suggest this spiritual "porosity" influences how some Catholics understood charitable work with the most marginal populations: when contact is potentially harmful, risking interaction through works of mercy can convey greater social, spiritual, and organizational merit (see also Benton 2016).

The willingness to touch (and manage) the Other through charity may counteract the negative impact of clerical abuse on the corporate Catholic brand. The Charity staff person continued:

I know . . . that [the president of the Charity] really works to, to highlight Charities, I mean [the executive director] will say "we're the best kept secret in Boston," that's what he likes to say. But you know it is kind of true, 'cause people are like, "Oh, I didn't know Catholic Charities did refugee and immigration work. Oh, I didn't know you have a Haitian Center!" . . . So, we need to do a much better job at marketing ourselves, which is why they have this whole marketing campaign now. We've actually started to invest money in positive advertising, and we need to get [it] out there.

Advertising charity to enhance Catholic institutional images was a formal Charity promotion strategy. On February 21, 2007, the agency intranet announced a campaign "[targeting] those with little or no knowledge of Catholic Charities, specifically those 35–54 years of age." The "overall communications strategy" recommended:

- Use current communications vehicles to convey clear, consistent messages regarding the breadth and scope of our services.
- Plan new communication activities and use new tools to introduce new audiences to the agency.
- Leverage central and regional development activities to convey messages.
- Develop client profiles from a variety of programs for a variety of uses.

- Use client profiles to demonstrate the significance of services provided.
- Define *Catholic Charities' brand* and use it consistently across the entire agency (my emphasis).
- Implement external communications policy-guidelines, procedures, and accountability for the external communications representing the agency.

Although advertising such activities could be fruitful in capturing the thirty-five- to fifty-four-year-olds' market, the instructions were ambiguous about whether the target market was future service users or potential donors (a subsequent interview suggested donors). Developing client profiles to "demonstrate the significance of services provided" resembled how aid agencies in Haiti circulated to funders "trauma portfolios"—dossiers (re)presenting the suffering of their clients—as tangible evidence of the agency's successful achievement of results (James 2004, 2010). Using commercial business strategies to promote anti-poverty work suggests faith-based charities are hybrid religious and secular corporations seeking to "Catholicize" social welfare and to weight the balance of merits and faults for every individual, and arguably the corporate body of the Church, toward salvation.

Institutions like the Charity have become integral civic actors managing migrants and other vulnerable populations in partnership with the state. That religious nonprofits provide social welfare with relatively minimal public oversight suggests greater attention must be paid to how these institutions operate in everyday life. The historical ties between the Center, the Church, and the Haitian communities of Greater Boston, as well as between the Center, the Charity, and public and private donors, offer a compelling portrait of these partnerships. But this work suggests Catholic corporate philanthropy has been extended to exceptionally marginal groups like Haitians, not simply from compassion, political solidarity, and opposition to structural inequities and injustice, but also to promote (and rehabilitate) the Catholic charitable brand.

#### A STATEMENT ON METHODS AND ETHICS

In mapping the Church's, the Charity's, and the Center's respective work in Greater Boston there were numerous challenges. Several key stakeholders could not be reached, declined participation, or did not respond to requests for information. Others who agreed to participate subsequently withdrew.<sup>25</sup> As concerns for privacy, especially for Center health services clients, prevented my speaking directly with most, typical encounters occurred in public instructional settings. Given these limitations, I consulted with Center staff and redesigned the project to focus on their challenges serving Haitian immigrant and refugees. As some were former clients, I learned much about the early history from them. I witnessed how staff and advisory board members composed the Center's "heart," resembling the "keepers of the flame" Stephen Hopgood (2006) described in his book on Amnesty

International. As individuals who protect and safeguard an organization's mission, keepers make personal and professional sacrifices to ensure institutional security. Those keepers participating in this project entrusted me with stories of the trials, disappointments, and joys of supporting the Center.

The story of the Haitian Multi-Service Center asks crucial questions about the Catholic Church, its teachings, and Catholic institutional relationships with Haitian immigrants, refugees, and others in need. Although the clergy sex abuse scandal marks one legitimacy crisis,<sup>26</sup> there are other issues warranting increased attention explored throughout this book: What is the practice of Catholic charity in everyday life? How has it changed over time? Have clerical sex scandals affected Catholic institutions' ability to fulfill their evangelical and charitable missions? How do Catholic charities approach contemporary political issues—foreign policy, economic and social welfare, abortion and contraception, same-sex marriage, health disparities, migration, and national security—in local settings? What does organized care for the poor, the homeless, the sick, and strangers among us, have to do with the Catholic brand, especially in Boston?

The following postmortem assessment moves from analyzing historically distal events shaping the Center's life to assessing proximal and acute "symptoms" of irreparable change. The chapters are roughly chronological, analyzing select encounters between Haitians, religion, and the state, ranging from colonial Saint-Domingue to the present, and the roles of Catholic charities in refugee resettlement (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 traces the paths of Haitian refugees through a variety of "purgatorial spaces" on their journeys to reach the Center. Using the mnemonic method of the "memory palace," the heart of the book portrays Haitians' quests for security and "life" and the Samaritans who aided them in establishing new social institutions in the diaspora. Chapters 4 through 9 offer an overview of the Center's birth, development, maturity, and, as some allege, decline—including intense institutional struggles over its identity and mission—preceding and succeeding the move into the Yawkey Center. Like many organizations, corporations, and even families, this story contains critical events reflecting each stakeholders' labors to balance charity, pragmatic mercy, and justice as each interpreted these concepts. I am grateful to have been allowed to witness these struggles with race, religion, and rights in a globalizing world.