

# Memory Palace I

## *The Birth of the Center*

*For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates.*

—GASTON BACHELARD

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

—FRANTZ PÉRALTE MONESTIME,  
FOUNDER AND FIRST HMSC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The search for genealogical roots can be a labor of love and a puzzle to be solved, especially for people of African descent. It is no less difficult to reconstruct our institutional histories. As I began piecing together the Center's biography, available records were scant. My search eventually brought me to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (RCAB) Archives in Braintree, Massachusetts. After selling its Brighton location to Boston College for \$65 million, the Church moved to a modern four-story, 140,000 square foot building in an industrial park owned by longtime "archdiocesan benefactor," billionaire Thomas Flatley.<sup>1</sup> In February 2016, the exterior of the large reddish brown brick building reminded me of major hospitals in Boston, as well as the new Yawkey Center (see Figure 10).

Like the Yawkey building, the RCAB headquarters had large windows, suites, cubicles, and a feeling of sterility the ubiquitous fluorescent lighting projected into its interior spaces. In contrast with many corporate offices and the other Charity social service buildings I had previously visited, the display of religious symbols in the Archdiocese of Boston Pastoral Center lobby was striking. Tables near the entrance contained pamphlets in multiple languages advertising upcoming spiritual retreats. Catholics Come Home® campaign materials invited lapsed practitioners to return. Pictures of Pope Benedict XVI were on the walls. In contrast, Catholic Charities agency buildings did not overtly proselytize clients with



FIGURE 10. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (RCAB) Pastoral Center. Photo credit: Erica Caple James.

spiritual materials. Apart from personal items on Center staff member desks, religious iconography and images were absent during my work on-site between 2006 and 2007.

After checking with an awaiting attendant, I lingered near the informational materials until the archivist, Robert Johnson Lally, led me to a room containing many historical documents.<sup>2</sup> Walking down a corridor fragrant with incense, I glimpsed a Catholic Mass in progress through stained-glass windows in a large chapel anchoring the modern building in the faith. After entering the archives—a nondescript room with uniform shelving containing parish records, Catholic bishops' writings, archdiocesan directories, and other items—I was told all priests' personnel files were removed from public access when the clergy sex scandal erupted in the early 2000s. Apart from a letter initially assigning Father Leandre Jeannot as an auxiliary priest, documentation of his tenure at St. Leo's was not available. After its suppression in 1999, parishioners' private baptismal, communion, marriage, and other records were transferred to St. Matthew Parish.

At a small table I examined the small stack of papers Lally had compiled. The first, dated September 2, 1966, recorded Rev. Shawn G. Sheehan's "Profession of Faith" and "Oath against Modernism" made to the dean of the Archdiocese of Boston, Charles A. Finn, when Sheehan was appointed St. Leo Parish pastor. In 1907, Pope Pius X labeled "modernism" a heresy because of its historical approach

to Jesus and the scriptures, its advocacy of secularism and church-state separation, and its foundation in rationalist philosophy. From 1910 until 1967 (when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith rescinded the oath), “each diocese was to have a body of censors who were to watch over all literature in any way connected with the Church. The agencies were to observe strict secrecy in all their proceedings. . . . And, finally all priests and teachers were required to take an oath against Modernism.”<sup>3</sup>

The next documents revealed routine collaborations between public and private, and religious and secular institutions—regardless of concerns each may have held about the others’ moral, philosophical, or theological beliefs. An October 9, 1967, letter recorded Boston’s inspection of St. Leo’s clubhouse for use as a daycare agency. Another undated page itemized renovation specifications: a cover letter and leasing agreement that Cardinal Richard Cushing and Arthur J. Gartland, then president of the antipoverty agency Action for Boston Community Development, Inc., had signed to lease St. Leo’s space for a Project Head Start childcare center.

The 1967 leasing agreement, addressed to the “Roman Catholic Archbishop Soul [*sic*],” revealed how the archdiocese and archbishop possess a secular body, the “Corporation Sole” (or “Corp Sole,” as a Charity administrator would later call it), to conduct business with secular entities. In Boston the Corporation Sole is defined as “a legal entity created under Massachusetts civil law in 1897 to provide the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston with a means to operate within the public statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts” (RCAB 2011: 12): “Corporation Sole statutes enable religious leaders—typically bishops or parsons—to be incorporated for the purpose of insuring the continuation of ownership of property dedicated to the benefit of a legitimate religious organization.”<sup>4</sup> As a temporal leader, the archbishop (or cardinal) of Boston is technically the “owner” of these hybrid secular/sacred establishments, such as the parish buildings, schools, churches, and other properties. His relationship to them, however, is largely pastoral, taking the form of spiritual care for his “flock.”<sup>5</sup> The ultimate ownership of Church properties became an issue after the 1999 St. Leo Parish suppression and a few years later, when Center stakeholders debated the future of the parish buildings and programs.

The RCAB archbishop also “serves as chairman of the board or president of numerous separately incorporated Catholic organizations that operate within the Archdiocese of Boston . . . [but] they are not under the control of the Corporation Sole” (RCAB 2011: 12). Although the archbishop does not “own” the institutions only affiliated with Corporation Sole, they are under his pastoral care. Corp Sole is responsible for, but does not directly manage, affiliated organizations, including the following: the Boston Catholic Television Center, Inc., a cemetery association, several Catholic high schools, and development foundations; health, retirement, and investment funds, trusts, and insurance groups; several seminary and

missionary societies; mission-related institutions like the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Boston; and finally, social service organizations, such as the Catholic Charitable Bureau of the Archdiocese of Boston, Inc. (the Charity).<sup>6</sup>

The collaborations revealed in the documents I reviewed among church, state, and private corporations (whether for profit or nonprofit) signaled two trends in social policy: federal funding for antipoverty initiatives was made available when the “caring state” (Daly 2009) strongly considered social welfare programs a right (as well as a responsibility). Secondly, third-party institutions fulfilled such needs when a neoliberal trend toward the privatization of social welfare arose (Wacquant 2009: 41–59). A page titled “itemization of non-federal share” outlined St. Leo’s spatial contribution to ABCD’s application to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) Community Action Program for furniture and equipment. The OEO, the federal agency administering programs under President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” offered to pay heating and lighting costs for one year. The OEO also administered the Head Start program until 1969, when it was transferred to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (renamed the Department of Health and Human Services in 1979). Although genealogical links between this Head Start Program and the parish childcare and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes offered to Haitians remain unclear, the Church supported pastoral initiatives in partnership with and on behalf of government.

Given the limited written records, interviews with many Center stakeholders helped me reconstruct its history. Although their recollection of dates, events, and structural transformations was rarely exact, their stories provided rich testimonies of the dramas propelling the influx of Haitians to Greater Boston, and the roles the archdiocese, St. Leo’s, the Charity, and the Center played in supporting them.

In contrast to the purgatorial sites in which Haitians had been detained since the 1970s, the Center was largely a space of security and remoralization rather than institutional violation and dehumanization (Frank and Frank 1991; James 2010; Kleinman 1988, 2006). The establishment of the Center at St. Leo’s followed the paths of earlier groups of Catholic migrants to Boston and paralleled similar religious and secular institution-building initiatives among diaspora Haitians in Miami, New York, and other North American cities (Glick-Schiller and Fournon 2001; Laguerre 1984, 1998; Mooney 2009; Pierre-Louis 2006; Rey and Stepick 2009; Stepick 1998; Zéphir 2004). Haitians mobilized religious and other professional networks to amass the knowledge, expertise, and material and social capital to build the organization, while struggling with acculturation challenges themselves. By the 1970s, as the Greater Boston Haitian population increased, some archdiocesan resources were made available to support them and ensure they would remain incorporated in the Church. But Haitians offered as many material, symbolic, and spiritual resources to the archdiocese and its charitable institutions as they received. As the stories of its founders demonstrate, the Center has been a remarkable place from which to consider the relationships between migrants and

public or private social welfare institutions, as well as how race, ethnicity, health, and legal status influence these social linkages.

### THE MEMORY PALACE

In 1892 and 1893, the Impressionist artist Claude Monet painted over thirty portraits of Rouen Cathedral in France to capture its image at different times of day, and in different weather conditions and seasons. The series of façades suggests an edifice like a cathedral holds different meanings for those who enter and inhabit such spaces over time than for those who view them from a distance. Finished in a studio in 1894, Monet's memory colored the final images we view today.<sup>7</sup>

In *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, China historian Jonathan D. Spence (1988) describes how a Jesuit merchant missionary taught local Chinese scholars several mnemonic techniques to aid their preparations for governmental exams. Ricci hoped his knowledge gifts would encourage them to explore the faith that developed these memory arts. As elaborated by Society of Jesus founder Ignatius of Loyola, Society members were taught to apply all five senses to vivify scriptural passages under study, thereby creating an imaginal space (Csordas 1994; Nordstrom 1997). By constructing a mental structure of a real or fictive space, like a "temple compound, a cluster of government offices, a public hostel, or a merchants' meeting lodge" (Spence 1988: 1), one could store information in each room, depositing factual details like ornaments in precise order "around the walls, between the windows, on chairs, beds, tables" (Spence 1988: 7). When layered visually and spatially in the mental structure, details could be recalled precisely: "Once your places are all fixed in order, then you can walk through the door and make your start . . . and all the images are ready for whatever you seek to remember" (Spence 1988: 9).

The memory palace concept is evocative not only as a mnemonic technique but also for its understanding of the visceral, sensory nature of space and time, as well as the recollection and interpretation of the same. No two individuals will construct an imaginal space in the same way. The sensory details of the place from which one retrieves artifacts of experience are unique, regardless of whether a space is real or imagined.

As an ethnographic tool, the memory palace concept helped in painting the Center's portrait from the details of others' experience. Center memories were inextricably linked to those of St. Leo Parish. Each person recalled the parish architecture in a unique way, revealing the "social blueprints" mapped onto the Center—the ways persons of different statuses and social roles were connected to place. Remembrances of the institution also revealed each individual's "kinesthetic orientation" to the building and persons who occupied its spaces. These descriptions illustrated each speaker's "visceral ways of sensing" (Desjarlais 1997: 72) social space and encoded the aesthetic values and moral sentiments embedded

in their experience. Center recollections vivified the narrator's feelings of safety and belonging, and/or vulnerability and exclusion. Each stakeholder's willingness to talk about its history was largely dependent on the emotions and sentiments institutional memories evoked.

Contested versions of the Center's origins are an indicator of stakeholder ambivalence. One account repeated by various Center staff and advisory board members identifies Father Leandre Jeannot and two social workers, Frantz Monestime and Evelyn Prophète, as its 1978 founders who, alongside other key Haitian and non-Haitian supporters, later formalized the program as the "Haitian Multi-Service Center."<sup>8</sup> Its founders, subsequent executive directors, staff persons, and community members intended the Center to become an independent Haitian-managed institution with no permanent oversight by either the Charity or Church, or by any other public or private agency. In this version, the Church provided space and administrative support, and the Center later joined the Charity; however, the exact date of the "merger" is disputed. Depending on to whom one speaks (or which texts one reads), the merger occurred in 1984, 1986, 1989, or even in the early 1990s.

The Charity's institutional website (as of this writing) presents the Center's origin story as follows: "Established by local Haitian community leaders, the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC) began in 1978 with a single service, English as a Second Language for recent Haitian immigrants. In 1984, the HMSC became a community service center of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Boston."<sup>9</sup> Behind this simple statement are protracted and contentious struggles for control, as well as shifts in the structural relationships between the Church, Charity, and community-based charitable institutions in the Massachusetts Catholic Charities network. Perhaps these two versions are simply different sides of the same coin.

Disputes regarding the Center's origin, mission, and purpose reflect its stakeholders' struggles to determine how power—cultural, gendered, pastoral, and corporate—should be exercised and toward what ends. These disagreements also reflected Haitians' concerns about identity, justice, citizenship, and sovereignty. Their rights-based approaches to social incorporation sometimes conflicted with Catholic charitable authorities' requirement that the Center uphold the tenets and practices of the Catholic faith without exception.

These debates also concerned cultural intimacy. In his work on social poetics in the nation-state, Michael Herzfeld (1997: 14) contrasts the state's "official self-presentation" (its façade, a form of cultural nationalism) with stereotypes of cultural practices circulating outside the nation—images resonating uncomfortably as true "in the privacy of collective introspection." The disjuncture between public circulating representations and vernacular idioms and practices inside the nation-state produces cultural intimacy, "the recognition of those aspects of cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but which nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (Herzfeld 1997: 3). Disputes about the Center's purpose reflected the broader Haitian community's

aspirations to greater civic power but also ambivalence regarding their capacity to manage the Center independently, especially given ongoing troubling public and private affairs (whether interpersonal, institutional, or national).

Ever-present fiscal weakness and community need often surpassed the Center's institutional capacity. The HMSC frequently suffered budgetary deficits; and first the Church, then later the Charity, closed financial gaps with their own resources, personnel, and finances. Between 1986 and 1992, the Charity gradually assumed financial oversight. Some staff and advisory board members felt the merger would provide greater organizational and financial stability, but others fought to retain the Center's autonomy and connection to the Haitian community. It was difficult to sustain the flames of community voluntarism in the face of budgetary challenges.

#### INTIMATE MEMORY

Early stakeholders' sensory memories of the Center's physical, social, and environmental conditions were vivid. Apart from a prefabricated modular structure housing the daycare, St. Leo's old Victorian buildings—the 12 Bicknell Street Victorian “convent” where Haitian nuns resided (and eventually housed most of the social service programs), the Harvard Street rectory where Father Leandre Jeannot lived, and St. Leo Church on Esmond Street—were perpetually in disrepair (see Figure 11). Mice left telltale signs of nightly activities on staff members' desks. Water pipes leaked and the boiler often failed on many frigid winter days. In summer, the old Victorian buildings were hot and crowded.

Although St. Leo's offered shelter, education, and care, the surrounding urban landscape was sometimes hazardous. In 1994, a *Boston Globe* article noted the perilous surroundings:

St. Leo's is located near a high-crime area, where drug dealers brazenly sell crack as they creep between Franklin Field and Franklin Hill housing developments. Prostitutes stroll along Blue Hill Avenue as if they are a legitimate part of the landscape. Left behind are the Christian values taught in the Bible . . . “In some respects, it is not that much different from the time when Jesus lived,” said [Meyer J.] Chambers, director of the [Office for] Black Catholics [a part of the Boston Archdiocese]. “It's the struggle between good and evil.” (Manly 1994)

The mixture of nostalgia and revulsion at these conditions invariably emerged in each interview. The physical spaces stakeholders endured created a feeling of cultural intimacy combining sentiments of embarrassment, aversion, and laughter, as well as feelings of pride, ownership, and solidarity. Although the desperation of its economically poor neighbors provoked perpetual break-ins, many described the Queen Anne Victorian with a wraparound front porch and third-floor gables as having a comforting “cozy feeling” (see Figure 12).



FIGURE 11. St. Leo Parish rectory, ca. 2004. Photo credit: Robert L. Powell.

During a 2007 interview, I asked a European American Charity administrator to describe the 12 Bicknell Street location. In speaking of the Center’s “unchanging” quality—associated with domestic sociality and pleasures of traditional Haitian cuisine—their response evoked tradition and modernity, but also solidarity amid poverty:



FIGURE 12. Haitian Multi-Service Center, 12 Bicknell Street, ca. 2006. Photo Credit: Robert L. Powell.

It was pretty much like it looks now, I mean, it never really changed. They have the big, the ESL classrooms, and the place was falling apart, full of people, you know an old computer lab, the childcare Center, um, it . . . you know it really never changed much. I mean I used to go there quite a bit, and it was always the same, but it was always full of clients. Full of clients. And you know the kitchen, and the cook, and the Haitian food . . . I used to love to go there so I could get a nice Haitian meal . . . there was always something breaking down, the water wasn't working, or the heat wasn't working, there was asbestos falling off the building [*laughing*] [and] lead paint! [*laughing*].

For this administrator, the Center was a “timeless” place, unvarying in routines and the ever-present needs and aspirations of numerous clients. But it was also a place in which one could encounter and consume authentic Haitian culture, improvise amid unexpected emergencies, learn, and feel at home. Although it might be tempting to interpret this administrator’s recollections as a form of cultural stereotyping—as if the Center’s “static” nature reflected the Other’s timelessness (Fabian 1983)—I don’t think the remarks were intended disparagingly.

At the advisory board meetings I attended, beginning in 2005, the feeling of camaraderie and shared purpose was enhanced by communally shared meals. Typically, these sensory feasts commenced with informal socializing over Haitian cuisine: fragrant plates of *diri kole*, white rice mixed with pinto beans spiced with

garlic, onion, and cloves; and *legim*, a stew of dark leafy greens, cabbage, onion, and other vegetables. Carnivores savored *poule kreyòl*—chicken cleaned with sour orange halves, boiled, patted dry, then fried to a deep golden brown—accompanied by a spicy “creole” tomato sauce. We sometimes had stewed marinated beef (*vyann*) or another delicacy, *griyo*, crisp fatty pork cubes marinated in a spiced citrus rub prior to frying. As always, a platter of crisp fried green plantain chips was on hand. *Pikliz*, a piquant relish of cabbage, shredded carrot, vinegar, and habanero peppers added tart fire to these dishes. Through the conviviality and cuisine native Haitians remembered their homeland, diaspora-raised Haitians gained greater exposure to their cultural patrimony, and new and long-standing allies were able to share, recall, and learn afresh Haiti’s cultural riches.

For “Susan Brown,” a European American volunteer from the mid-1980s, memories of the physical plant and décor not only evoked the aesthetic riches of Haitian culture but also gender distinctions between the sexes:

SB: I don’t know if you saw the Haitian Center but . . . they are very artistic! . . . Well . . . the murals that they did . . . the murals would give all that sense of culture and beauty in detail.

ECJ: Where were these murals?

SB: On the first floor on the wall.

ECJ: My big regret is that I don’t have an image of what it looked like inside before the move.

SB: . . . It . . . had a wood structure. I believe it was three floors. It had a porch . . . and a vestibule area. If you went straight ahead there would be . . . two at least large rooms with the daycare center. So, they were really large and had space for their activities.

ECJ: So, the daycare was in the 12 Bicknell building, at first.

SB: Yes, it was, and it had several places . . . a place to play, [for] eating, and . . . little classrooms . . . and so forth. So, when you go up the stairs that would be the place where we had our receptionist, a lovely Haitian woman who knew all. I felt like—I’m not trying to be biased in terms of gender—but there was a lot of maturity in middle-aged and even younger Haitian women, and a wiseness. . . . She was an older woman. I hope she’s still . . .

As I participated in and observed programs between 2006 and 2007, I had similar impressions of the women staff members, especially the Sante Manman and health outreach staff. Susan continued:

SB: Then we had ESL and [the] AIDS [program], and [an] administrative office—very small and almost movable. It was almost, again, emblematic of no administration. But the beauty was the direct service [and] the people, and the vibrancy of [their] coming for their services. But there was very little in the way of administrative space.

ECJ: For the AIDS patients if they wanted confidentiality, was there a space for them?

SB: Oh yeah, they had their own office—absolutely—and that was very honored, and the space for the counseling was private. . . . The doctor had his own space. . . . there was another floor where the ESL students were. . . . It was a big space, and it was a very well-developed program. I think that’s all I remember about it.

In this volunteer’s view, the direct care between staff members and clients, and especially the Haitian women employees’ wisdom, rendered the space one of “feminine” pastoral power.

Not all stakeholders romanticized the Center. One European American staff member said of the 12 Bicknell building, “It was pretty much a shithole, physically. It was a terrible, terrible building. . . . Anyone who says it was nice was lying. It was falling apart.” For this individual, the visceral reminders of cultural differences between non-Haitians and Haitians were inescapable onslaughts to the senses: “We had a lobby. Some of the classroom people would just walk in and they would bring their food and you would always smell food, whether you liked it or not.”

Undoubtedly, Center memories were communicated using such vivid language because for many it was a home away from home. In *The Poetics of Space*, the philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1969: 6) describes how intimate spaces evoke hope, security, melancholy, and nostalgia:

We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images. Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.

In recreating the Center through a palace of memories, I was reminded it literally was home for many stakeholders, and for others, a home away from a homeland left behind. The Haitian nuns resided in the convent, Father Leandre Jeannot in the rectory, and undocumented persons who were granted temporary sanctuary within its walls considered the space to be as much of a home as did St. Leo’s parishioners, and later, the Center’s clients, staff, and advisory board members.

#### WHITE FLIGHT

In a June 2007 conversation with “Harold Jackson,” an African American St. Leo parishioner, I heard many stories about the demographic changes producing St. Leo’s as a majority Black and Haitian parish. Boston African Americans once had their own parish in Lower Roxbury. After purchasing a former Protestant church for the Black community, Cardinal Cushing had dedicated St. Richard’s in

1946. The Black parish was controversial, with some African Americans viewing it as a “form of racial segregation,” while others thought it offered a sign of having achieved greater equality in the archdiocese: “Henry E. Quarles, Sr., a leading member of the local black Catholic community . . . argued that just like the Irish, French, and Italian Catholics before them, blacks wanted and needed their own parish” (Leonard 2009: 151–52). At the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling (1954) mandating desegregation of public schools, Cushing argued, “in light of the recent Supreme Court decision, I think we should do more . . . to incorporate the colored people in the parish in which they live” (Cushing 1956, cited in Leonard 2009: 153). St. Richard’s closed in 1964 (Leonard 2009: 153).

Jackson described St. Leo’s as predominantly White—Irish and Italian, specifically—until “we” (people of African descent) began moving in from Lower Roxbury, which had been predominantly Black. As the proportion of African Americans in the area increased, the neighborhood rapidly changed:

*HJ:* At that time, I doubt very much . . . if there was two-dozen Haitian brothers and sisters there at the church. I doubt it. Ok, now, Father [Joseph] Gaudet. He took over, I think in 1967, or ’68, . . . and then the church was damn near all Black then!

*ECJ:* Wow . . . that was quick!

*HJ:* Real quick! And um, there was a sprinkle of White folks still in the church. It was majority . . . Black Catholic, and then, all our Haitian brothers and sisters . . . and also Cape Verdean brothers and sisters.

St. Leo’s having rapidly become a predominantly Black parish reflected (in part) the realities of racial segregation in Boston. Over the twentieth century Dorchester’s demographic composition shifted radically as African Americans moved beyond Lower Roxbury to historically majority White areas of Dorchester. While some neighborhoods retained their Irish Catholic roots, the area surrounding St. Leo’s was “unique in 1960: of the seventeen parish churches in Dorchester and upper Roxbury, only St. Leo’s Church was surrounded on all sides by Jewish homes” (Gamm 1999: 91).

In the 1950s and 1960s, as the Jewish population fled to the suburbs and Blacks began to reside in the parish district near Franklin Park, Franklin Field, and Mount Bowdoin, the majority White St. Leo parishioners (residing mostly elsewhere) moved from the parish entirely. From a 1962 population of 5,810 parishioners, the population was 1,100 in 1970 (Gamm 1999: 91). By 1978, when St. Leo’s housed the Haitian Multi-Service Center, both the church population and the surrounding neighborhood was overwhelmingly Black. The racial transformation occurred at a much earlier period than in Catholic neighborhoods north and south of St. Leo’s (Gamm 1999: 91).

According to sociologist Regine O. Jackson (2007: 199), an influx of Haitians accounts for this demographic shift from White to Black.<sup>10</sup> Jackson’s

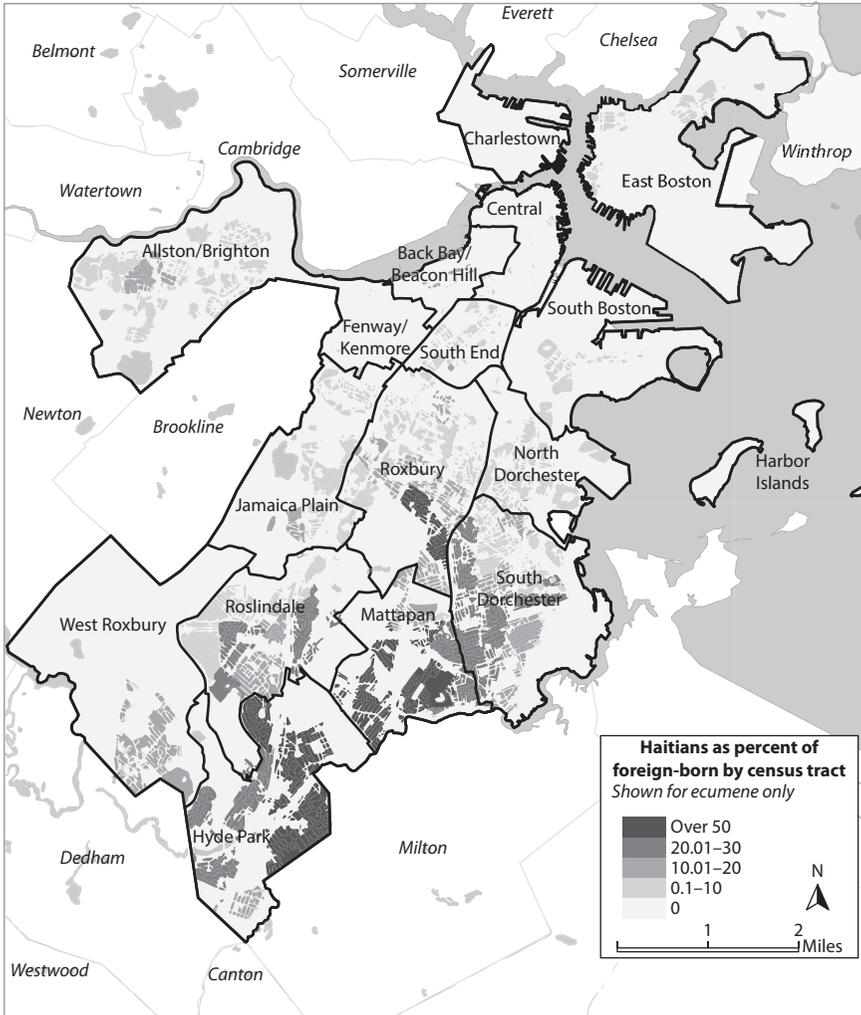


FIGURE 13. Haitian immigrants in Boston. Image credit: Boston Redevelopment Authority.

research on Boston Haitian immigrants indicates they migrated in four waves: “the *Pathfinders* (pre-1965); the *Core* (1965–1979); the *Boom* (1980–1991); and the *Newcomers* (1992–present)” (2007: 193). Haitian pathfinders comprised mostly middle-class professionals: “academics and teachers—participants in a program called the Congo Experiment who came to Boston when their contracts expired with the Congolese government; engineers seeking to take advantage of employment opportunities at General Electric and Polaroid; and physicians interning at Massachusetts General Hospital. Others were politicians in exile” (Jackson 2007: 196). After migrating, “pathfinders” selected where to settle in part to

distinguish themselves ethnically from African Americans, against whom racial discrimination and segregation had been entrenched. They chose predominantly White residential areas in which multifamily housing units, “triple-deckers,” were available as residences and investment properties later leased to new Haitians (Jackson 2007: 197).

Although each subsequent “wave” encompassed diverse sectors of the Haitian population, Catholicism became central to the Boston Haitian community because it provided “an important symbolic resource in the formation of an ethnic community” (Jackson 2007: 197). Since “Catholic churches coordinate residential behavior because they restrict membership to local residents” (Jackson 2007: 193), Haitian migrants chose housing and established local businesses in proximity to three Catholic churches (see Figure 13)—St. Angela’s on Blue Hill Avenue, St. Matthew’s on Stanton Street, and St. Leo’s—the three parishes initially forming the territorial boundary for Haitian settlement.

St. Leo’s became the unofficial “mother church” for the Haitian population (Jackson 2007: 198). In Haiti, parents typically sent their children to parochial schools, and the availability of Catholic education and “church sponsored recreational programs and activities for youth” (Jackson 2007: 200) made settling in Mattapan and Dorchester even more attractive. By the time the “newcomers” settled in Greater Boston, a 1996 *Boston Globe* article stated the growing Haitian population helped sustain Catholic institutions: “Haitian children are the salvation of parochial schools, from St. John’s in Cambridge (89 percent Haitian) to St. Angela’s in Mattapan (71 percent) to St. Catherine’s in Somerville and Most Precious Blood in Hyde Park (both now about 50 percent Haitian)” (Radin 1996). In choosing parochial education Haitians may have given as much to Catholic institutions as they received.

But Haitian immigrants have not been equally successful financially. They also have obligations to sustain families across national borders. Analysis of 1990 census data suggested twenty percent of Massachusetts Haitians lived in poverty, and “71 percent were making under \$15,000 a year. Even though many Haitians work multiple, menial jobs for minimum wages, almost all regularly send money to family and friends in Haiti, where unemployment is around 60 percent” (Radin 1996). Including himself among those providing for others in the United States and Haiti, Father Jeannot interpreted the exigencies of everyday Haitian life for outsiders:

“The Haitian family here has to sustain not only itself but three or four families in Haiti,” says Rev. Leandre Jeannot, pastor of St. Leo’s Church in Dorchester, the unofficial mother church of Haitian Catholics in Massachusetts. “Everyone, even myself, compromises their living here to participate in that. Without the diaspora, Haiti would not survive.” (Radin 1996)

In 1972, as the rapid demographic changes intensified, the archdiocese installed a Haitian priest, the future Monsignor Jeannot, at St. Leo’s (see Figure 14).



FIGURE 14. Rev. Leandre Jeannot, as pictured in a Christmas card, 1981.

### MONSIGNOR LEANDRE JEANNOT

Given Boston's racial history, the presence of a Black priest was significant. Father Jeannot was largely responsible for St. Leo's becoming the heart of Greater Boston's Haitian community (and the Center's base). Jeannot left Haiti in 1959 after having been persecuted politically there (under François Duvalier):

I was an elementary school teacher. . . . I was also a politician—a leader of the Mouvement Organisation du Pays. . . . Orders were given not to arrest me but to kill

me. . . . I escaped by chance; I just happened not to be home when they came. It was not only Tonton Macoute [paramilitary forces loyal to Duvalier]. An officer from the army came, too. He declared to my family if they find me, they would shoot me.” (Radin 1996: 18)

The Salesians of St. John Bosco hid Jeannot and he later escaped to the Dominican Republic (Radin 1996: 18). He joined the Salesian order and studied theology in Lyon, France, prior to his ordination in 1970 in Medellín, Colombia. In 1970, he came to the United States, first serving in the St. Theresa of Avila Parish in Brooklyn, New York, and then at the Lakes Parish in New Jersey in 1971 (Isidor 2001). Jeannot became pastor of St. Leo’s in 1976, when Rev. Gaudet was “dispatched to a mission in Peru.”

Recollections of Father Jeannot paint a striking picture of his personal charisma and pastoral leadership of the Haitian community. Pastoral power, to recall, is a power of care in which a “shepherd” attends to the physical and spiritual needs of each member of a collective flock through sacramental and charitable acts. According to Harold Jackson, a component of St. Leo’s appeal was Jeannot’s racial, ethnic, and national identity, as well as his position in the archdiocese:

People flocked to our church because they had a Haitian priest in charge. OK? In charge. They came from Malden, they came from Somerville, they came from Brockton; they came from ALL of the cities surrounding Boston to our church. Our church was more or less the . . . main church for the . . . Haitian community. And you have to remember that Haitian folks are . . . about 90 percent Catholic. . . . He used to, now he was so busy—and God forbid, this may be part of the reason why his life was taken so soon, because he used to go do a Mass, do an English Mass in St. Leo’s in Dorchester, then . . . a Haitian-Creole Mass on the same day, and then he’d go to Cambridge and do a Mass. Then he’d go to Brockton and do a Mass . . . and that was every Sunday. And that was every Sunday. It’s amazing. He lived for his people.

In this account, Father Jeannot was a loving pastor who made personal sacrifices to ensure the safety, security, and salvation of his flock. Jackson continued:

He would give them his last dollar if they needed it. . . . He would give him, he, the man would give away his whole—because he had a small paycheck from the archdiocese, and he would give it away most of the time. He would give his shirt, and he would give his everything, you know . . . because people needed things like that: clothing, food, and shelter. . . . He was just that, that loving towards his folks.

Until his death from cancer in 2001, Father Jeannot’s pastoral work not only emphasized caring for others, but also political advocacy for Haitians. Like Father Jean-Juste in Miami, who advocated for more humane treatment of Haitian detainees (see Chapter 3), Jeannot protested publicly against Haiti’s political crises. (Jeannot’s religious order, the Salesians, were particularly prominent as supporters of his nation’s pro-democracy movement).



FIGURE 15. Mass at St. Leo Roman Catholic Church. Photo credit: Robert L. Powell.

In 1992, at the height of unauthorized Haitian migration to the United States, Jeannot denounced publicly President George H. W. Bush's continuation of his predecessor President Reagan's deterrent policy to repatriate Haitian "boat people" without permitting them to apply for asylum: "It is not human, what they are doing. . . . The people in the boats, who have spent days hungry, they send them to hell. Instead of killing them, they make them kill themselves. How can they treat them this way? I am really sad. I couldn't even eat today. I will keep praying" (Weld 1992: 14). In 1987, after the self-immolation of Haitian immigrant Antoine Thurel on the steps of the Massachusetts State House, Jeannot described the suicide in political rather than theological terms. The death indexed the frustrations of Haitians who dreamed of returning to Haiti but could not: "We have all been hoping for democracy after so many years of dictatorship, but there is no peace, and there is much abuse. . . . The man who killed himself was like so many; after so many years away they wanted to go home and live quietly, but now they cannot" (Constable 1987).

In other accounts, a merciful Jeannot justified how Haitian Catholics' obligations to labor for near and distant family restricted their capacity to attend obligatory weekly Masses: "Most of the people who are willing to come have to work on Sundays . . . Some of them only have one Sunday off each month or they have to take care of their families, so it's hard for them to come" (Graham 1989). Although for other

Haitians, Sundays were reserved for celebrations of their collective religious faith (see Figure 15), on Friday evenings, Jeannot conducted charismatic services. Hundreds of Haitian men, women, and children assembled in a sacred celebration that countered the daily stressors of urban living and relieved some of their burdens.

The services made immanent a sense of life beyond the profane, a reminder of the spirit animating the corporate body of the Church:

The beep-beep of car alarms switching on punctures the Friday twilight. But as night falls on the reminders of how mean these streets can be, a chorus of hallelujahs, sung in soft Caribbean accents to the tune of “Amazing Grace,” floats through the air. Weather-beaten old St. Leo’s is lighting up for the weekly Mass of the charismatics, people who practice a more emotive and demonstrative Catholicism than is the norm in traditional churches. Neatly dressed adults and carefully scrubbed children sway to beautiful music and the lilt of hundreds of voices raised in Haitian Creole.

As pastor, Jeannot mediated the connection between parishioners and the divine:

Incense perfumes the air. Face grave, Father Jeannot moves slowly through the crowd, bearing before him a large ostensory, or monstrance—the ornate vessel that contains the host, central to the sacrament of Holy Communion. . . . The faithful surge forward to touch the gilded, sunburst-shaped container and to connect with this man who embodies both their faith and the events that set in motion the first wave of Haitians’ flight from their homeland. (Radin 1996)

Parishioners connecting to Jeannot’s sacramental and symbolic power shared healing and, literally, inspiration. I would later learn from Center program staff, particularly the women, how charismatic worship services were an integral component of their piety. A more “feminine” form of pastoral power rooted in Marianism, devotion to Mary the mother of Jesus, sustained the more public pastoral outreach through which they engaged individual clients and the community.

Although, Jeannot’s personal charisma, pastoral care, and personal story contributed to his pastoral power, his depiction of Haitians to the media tended to reinforce negative stereotypes of Haitians’ vulnerability and dependency:

“Before I came, the Haitian people were timid and shy,” he said. “It was sad. They felt isolated from the church. They were weak and easily exploited. Sure, I came here to perform services and give the sacraments. But I also came here to teach, to take care of the people, their feelings and their needs.” The isolation was painful. In Haitian culture, Father Jeannot says, people depend on their priest to give them guidance on everything, from family matters to career counseling. “It’s almost to the point of paternalism,” he said. (Manly 1994)

At the time of his December 1994 statement, the upheaval of Haiti’s coup years was only beginning to relent after the Multinational Force “restored” democracy on October 15, 1994. Regardless, rapid influxes of Haitian newcomers to Boston

continued. (I return to Father Jeannot's pastoral care for Haitians in Chapter 5, when analyzing narratives challenging his benevolence.)

. . .

To step briefly outside this memory palace, it is important to note how depictions of the Haitian community as uniformly downtrodden, weak, blindly faithful, innocent, more authentically pious, and so on, have strategic uses. Ethical publicity—public representations of either individual or institutional accountability and responsibility toward those in need—can be useful when countering negative or scandal publicity (James 2010). These dynamics are no less present when considering public representations of pastoral care among religious actors, agencies, and institutions, as opposed to their actual practices.

Rather than seeing Haitians' reliance on Catholic leaders and institutions or their religiosity as apolitical—a sign of false consciousness, misrecognition of exploitation, or resignation to the injustices of temporal existence—I suggest the charisma and pastoral power flowing in private worship at St. Leo's provided the foundation for empowerment and civic action. As sociologist Margarita Mooney (2009: 78) writes of Catholic Charismatic prayer groups in the Miami Haitian community, such participation should not be viewed as a “retreat from social action, in particular, the kinds of social and political projects associated with liberation theology,” nor should the flow of charisma be viewed as moving solely from pastor to parishioner as care, but rather, “praying . . . is a *way of giving to others*” (Mooney 2009: 77; emphasis in the original). Writing of members of Notre Dame d'Haïti Catholic Church in Miami, Mooney (2009: 77) affirms prayer not only fulfills a religious obligation; it is a form of labor enabling all participants to contribute regardless of material means:

Members of Notre Dame attended church in part because they see worship as an obligation to God and also because prayer represents one potent way for them to give to others. Not everyone in the community can give material support to others . . . but they can all pray together. Even extremely needy Haitians said that through praying together, they transformed themselves into givers and not just recipients of aid [and infused] their social situation with a different meaning, a meaning that inspires them to become actors in their own drama rather than falling into despair or hopelessness.

A consideration of prayer as labor that enables the person praying to become an active agent, regardless of material circumstances, influenced parish efforts to support the community. This conception aligns with historical Catholic conceptions of charity as a reciprocal rather than one-sided exchange (see Chapter 2).

Over time, the pastoral programs at St. Leo's began transforming into a formal social service center. In response to social need, Jeannot was reported as inaugurating volunteer social service work out of his residence:

“My bell rings a lot,” he said. “Sometimes a family will show up at my door. They have no money and they are hungry. Or someone will have their car break down and they need cab fare to get home.” . . . Father Jeannot then opened his office and home, located in the Rectory, a few steps from the chapel, to the people. And they started coming in larger numbers, becoming a part of the church community, volunteering for groups to provide youth counseling and leadership training. (Manly 1994; the paragraphing is reversed.)

In a 2001 article in the *Boston Globe* memorializing Father Jeannot after his death, Pierre Imbert described him as someone who wove the diverse threads of the Haitian community into a single tapestry through the Center:

“He was a true father in every sense of the term,” said Pierre Imbert, executive director of the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Dorchester, which Jeannot founded in 1978. “The sense of community didn’t come until he came,” added Imbert, wiping away tears. “Pe [pè—father in Haitian Creole] Jeannot was the glue that brought this community together.” . . . Helping immigrants struggling for social and economic advancement, the Center is much more than a human service agency: It is the tightknit population’s town square, the place they gather for news about Haiti or their community. And the one person who would never say no to any request for help was Jeannot. (Tench 2001)

One parishioner’s 1994 media statement described St. Leo’s as a place enabling her to live and feel part of a family: “St. Leo’s is my life,” says Carol Millien. “It’s like a family. I love it so much. It’s like I am in Haiti. I would like to move to Florida but I am staying here. I can’t leave my family behind” (Manly 1994). The parish’s success arose from enabling parishioners (and others) to tack between sacred and secular realms through the social services provided:

This is about the balance between the words of the Bible and the ways of the streets. St. Leo’s has become more than a place of worship, where practicing Catholics can receive the sacraments, make confessions and study the Bible. St. Leo’s also provides a myriad of social services to bridge the gap. (Manly 1994)

From the charism of pastoral power flowing among the pastor and parishioners, the Haitian Multi-Service Center emerged as a secular, professional, but “pastoral” institution—a bulwark against the external challenges of racism, crime, and legal insecurity—that promoted literacy, job training, health, citizenship, and “salvation” in temporal realms.

#### OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER

While resident Haitian nuns began offering childcare, and volunteer parishioners taught ESL classes in St. Leo’s’ careworn Victorian buildings, a small group of Haitian professionals began meeting in another part of Boston each Sunday to draft a proposal for a Haitian social service center. The proposed program was modeled on the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), a Philadelphia-based

vocational training organization founded in 1964 by African American pastor Rev. Leon H. Sullivan.<sup>11</sup> Sullivan established hundreds of branches in the United States and developing countries.<sup>12</sup> In partnership with IBM, OIC provided a twelve-week, seven-hour-a-day course in a simulated office environment requiring a dress code. The federally funded Boston OIC branch gained recognition for “turn[ing] jobless, disadvantaged Boston residents into employees with salable skills in word processing, data entry, computer operations, and computer programming, at no cost to the students” (Kidder 1993). At the time, two Center founders, Evelyn Prophète and Frantz Monestime, worked at the OIC Boston branch.

The Center pioneers’ proposal for a Haitians-serving-Haitians social service program was not the first, nor would it be the last. In the 1980s, other major Haitian organizations provided comprehensive services to Haitian refugees and immigrants. The earliest, the Cambridge Haitian-American Association (CHAMA), served the Haitian community from 1975 until September 1991 (when the IRS seized its assets for failure to pay back taxes). The League of Haitian Families, established in Boston’s Back Bay in 1984, later moved to the South End until its closure as a result of bankruptcy in 1992. Both organizations suffered from common vulnerabilities facing grassroots nonprofits:

Shoestring budgets, limited cash flow, burgeoning needs, and poor management all contributed to the demise of CHAMA and the league [*sic*]. Grants from private sources were always welcome, but they were rarely sufficient to meet operating costs. Government agencies such as the Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants provided funding, as well, but only through a cost-reimbursement arrangement. The result: there was never enough money to keep up with the rent, the payroll, the telephone bill, the emergencies, and, most important . . . to pay closer attention to how money was being spent. (Ray 1992)

The League’s former director remarked, “We come from a culture whereby if you had money and it was a choice between paying taxes and paying people, you pay the people. To us, that may be a good quality; to the IRS, it is not” (Ray 1992). This statement offers an important counternarrative to discourses of Haitian “corruption.” The ethics of paying people illustrates a moral economy promoting “life as livelihoods” among Haitians who fought to establish sustainable advocacy institutions.

The third major Haitian organization assisting refugees, the Haitian Multi-Service Center, would not be immune from similar fiscal and material challenges. In 1992, a Center legal aid coordinator described additional obstacles Haitian social service organizations confronted to meet the needs of refugees: “There are so many emergencies that you can’t keep up. . . . The refugees have medical issues and financial issues, and we have to respond to those. . . . We try, we really try, as much as possible to set them up in some comfort” (Ray 1992). At the time, the Center had an in-house refugee resettlement program. After the refugees’ arrival in Boston, the program’s staff members would screen them for literacy in English and place them in the Center’s ESL classes or in an appropriate Haitian Creole class (for those who

could not read or write their native language). Staff members also found refugees housing and employment opportunities and assisted them with the process of applying for political asylum. Staff even obtained clothing and furniture donations from factories to help the migrants with their transition. The Center also offered counseling, document translation services, training for nurses and home health aides, and maternal/child health education in the Sante Manman program (Ray 1992).

At a time when federal antipoverty programs were diminishing and anti-immigrant sentiments were growing, instituting a sustainable program would prove enormously difficult. Center founders' stories epitomize the trials of migration, social integration, and the tribulations of institution-building. In response to the Haitian community's growth in the United States, both Haitian cultural and Catholic modes of care informed the strategies and tactics employed to establish a formal institution, (re)producing a complex moral economy.

#### FOUNDER FRANTZ PÉRALTE MONESTIME

I was surprised by how much Frantz Monestime chose to share given his initial reluctance to speak (see Chapter 1). He was born on November 7, 1942, in Hinche, a small city in Haiti's Central Plateau, during an intense period of suppression of Haitian Vodou by the Catholic Church and Haitian state. With matrilineal connections to Charlemagne Péralte, the famous guerilla revolutionary who fought against the American occupation of Haiti (1915–34), he was a proud businessman who had accomplished much despite deadly obstacles.

Although my previous research should have prepared me, I wasn't expecting to receive his trauma narrative. The oldest of sixteen children (eleven boys and five girls), Monestime completed primary and secondary schooling in Hinche, then studied medicine in Port-au-Prince at the state university medical school until his studies were interrupted by political turmoil. Delivered in a factual manner, his words of rupture were jarring: "When Duvalier killed my father . . . we left Haiti to go into political asylum." Stunned by this disclosure, I waited for him to finish telling me he had completed a year of school in the United States and another year in Spain while in exile before returning to the United States permanently. Then I asked if he'd be willing to discuss the circumstances surrounding his father's death. He agreed, saying, "It is something everybody knows, and I have even spoken about it before on the radio."

Between 1957 and 1986, François and Jean-Claude Duvalier created a climate of fear through disappearances, random attacks on organizations and associations, and assaults against members of civil society previously deemed innocent and untouchable—women, the elderly, children, and clergy, and so on (Trouillot 1990). Among those targeted, however, were members of the Haitian army whom Papa Doc suspected of treason. Monestime's father was a prominent military officer who was executed at Fort Dimanche alongside four other family members serving in the military.<sup>13</sup> On that day, nineteen military officers were killed for reputedly plotting against the president.

After the three-day trial, Monestime told me, the execution took place on Thursday, June 8, 1967, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the same day the verdict was read. He learned about the execution from a local barber who heard the news on the radio before the stations were silenced. Monestime was told the news while on a night walk with his cousin, the Haitian vice consul to Canada. He had to mobilize his family quickly to avoid further reprisals. Later the same night the family hid to await an opportunity to seek asylum at the American Embassy. At twenty-four years old, Frantz became the de facto head of the family. He was now responsible for hiding and disguising them so they could make their escape. The journey to the embassy was an ordeal. The large group divided into two the next morning and pretended to be families dropping off their children at school. Monestime shared how frightened they were because Duvalier's *tonton makout* regularly surveyed the embassy. The family reached the compound and requested asylum. Duvalier ultimately permitted the women and children under the age of fifteen to leave the country, but he wanted to execute everyone over the age of sixteen. Although Frantz's mother and young siblings were able to leave in August, he and his brother were trapped at the embassy until January 1968. Diligent efforts made to solicit external support from the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Vatican, and President Lyndon B. Johnson ultimately yielded their freedom. Freedom did not come without scars. Frantz said for years he had nightmares about the flight to the embassy, his period of internment, and the escape from Haiti.

Although the details of the execution and flight were shocking and unanticipated, I was struck by his ability to speak publicly about the execution of his father in contrast with his stated reluctance or, perhaps, his refusal to speak about the founding of the Center and his role as executive director. What had made his tenure so challenging?

In May 1970, after settling in the United States, Monestime began working at the OIC of Greater Boston as an ESL teacher. With its mission of "Helping People Help Themselves,"<sup>14</sup> OIC trained Monestime to evaluate clients in reading, math, and other workplace skills using the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service (JEVS) Evaluation System.<sup>15</sup> He said OIC used a "theory of the whole person" and targeted programs to "the man who may be coming out of an institution" (i.e., a prison or drug rehabilitation facility) to enable him (or her) to become productive workers through literacy classes and other training. It was at OIC that Monestime first encountered Evelyn Prophète, the Center's cofounder.

#### EVELYN PROPHÈTE

I found Evelyn Jovian Prophète in January 2011 after a lengthy search ended at a Boston public school fewer than three miles from either St. Leo's or the new Yawkey Center. She was teaching Haitian children who had been evacuated after the 2010 earthquake to learn English and adjust to American culture. As some eight-year-olds had no prior schooling, her work involved basic literacy

instruction. Prophète's service resembled the teaching and pastoral care she had previously offered at the Center and the formative expertise gained in vocational rehabilitation at OIC.

When the last student had left, we sat at one of the small round children's tables to discuss how she came to the United States and her role in launching the Center. She was born in 1958 in Léogâne, Haiti—the epicenter of the devastating 2010 earthquake—one of six children, four girls and two boys. Until the 1960s, her father worked for a large sugarcane manufacturing company with headquarters in Canada. He then decided to leave Haiti for Toronto but ultimately settled in Montreal. The rest of the family joined him when she was in high school.

Prophète did not have an easy time in Canada and returned to Haiti at a very young age to marry someone who was almost the same age as her father. It was an act of rebellion, she said, implying she had wanted to escape her family's control by marrying the older man. Marriage would not provide an easy escape—her husband was authoritarian and abusive. Her father managed to have the marriage dissolved (she did not explain how) and her parents raised her three children in Canada so she could go back to school. An aunt living in Boston told Prophète about a program in Roxbury, Massachusetts, providing English language instruction, job training, mentoring, and other services to the poor and newly arrived immigrants, while also paying students a small weekly stipend of \$98 to \$125 per week. As she described it, "OIC was the only place to learn English . . . look for a job . . . and learn a trade." The program accepted her from Montreal, and she came to the United States.

After meeting her at OIC, Monestime knew Prophète to be a "very smart young lady" who was "dedicated to what she was doing," but who also had a spirit of sacrifice. With his assistance (according to him), OIC hired her. Prophète described the generosity of Mrs. Anderson, an African American OIC administrator who decided to coach her for her employment interview with a manager. Prophète was successful and became a work sample evaluator who tested a person's psychomotor functioning, attention span, and capacity for various kinds of technical skills.

With two Haitian counselors—as well as a third, René George, who conducted intake interviews—Haitians began to flock to OIC. Of the 360 students recruited per month, a growing percentage was Haitian. Monestime said Father Jeannot would send Haitian clients to OIC periodically. According to another Center founder, the program grew to nearly 45 percent Haitian over time. Monestime rationalized how other social service organizations were 100 percent Spanish (it was ambiguous if he was distinguishing the predominant language or the ethnicity of the clientele), and, in addition to facing discrimination at other social service agencies, Haitians were "so hungry for knowledge." Attaining economic independence was also vital to promote family reunification for Haitians who had left loved ones in Haiti and needed to show sufficient income to the INS in order to sponsor them. There was another sociocultural component to their advocacy on

Haitians' behalf arising from gender ideals according to which men were expected to provide financially for their families. Monestime said, "He has to work, have a bank book, and go to immigration to show he can sponsor his wife and kids. We were helping them."

Monestime asserted this assistance was not solely around literacy; through OIC, they helped their compatriots with English language acquisition, and indirectly, immigration advocacy services. His colleagues also prepared Haitians without prior formal education and work skills to enter the "modern" labor force: "Some Haitians came who'd never seen a doctor, ever. . . . People from the countryside, boat people, who'd never seen a doctor or a light bulb." The staff inculcated new disciplines (Foucault 1979) and bodily praxes (Bourdieu 1977), enabling clients to "integrate" more fully into the workplace. Similar to their later assistance to refugees at the Center, Prophète said Monestime taught some OIC Haitian clients "hygiene"—that is, how to use a bathroom, wash dishes, and prepare themselves for laboring in American work settings. Monestime affirmed the Haitian staff made lists of Greater Boston companies' hiring needs, "what kind of work, products, [and] skills, [were] needed." Then the companies conducted trainings at OIC and offered future employment for clients.

In a 2007 interview, "Murielle Estimé," a Center health educator who assisted Haitian elders, told me she had attended OIC of Greater Boston. In 1979, she migrated to Boston as a "resident alien" sponsored by her husband, who had emigrated the previous year. She studied English, then completed training in microelectronics, working for seven years as a manufacturer at Teradyne (a corporation creating electronic systems to test semiconductors).<sup>16</sup> She next spent ten years in a similar capacity at Raytheon (an electronic defense systems company).<sup>17</sup> A few years later, Center volunteers provided similar, although less formal, vocational rehabilitation training and accompanied clients to their new places of employment to show them the routines needed to operate factory machinery.

By the early 1980s at OIC, the practice of favoritism for Haitian clients ultimately caused trouble for its Haitian personnel, and (perhaps) exacerbated the fiscal shortfalls OIC had already suffered as a result of cuts in federal funding. Both Monestime and Prophète described a visit President Ronald Reagan made to OIC of Greater Boston. Each linked the presidential visit to OIC's decline in the 1980s and, implicitly, to their own loss of employment. On January 26, 1983, Reagan visited three institutions in "enterprise zones" to highlight how partnerships between private firms and community-based NGOs combat urban poverty by preparing youth and disadvantaged persons to work in the high technology sector. OIC Boston staff members hoped the visit would yield additional funding for the national OIC organization and their local office. Cuts in federal funding for "manpower" programs (since Reagan had taken office in 1981) had forced the Boston OIC office to reduce staff from 110 to twenty-eight by the time of the 1983 presidential visit (Kidder 1983). Although one news article said Reagan's reaction to OIC appeared

positive, someone present during the visit felt “the President was just ‘setting up for the next election’” (Kidder 1983). When asked “whether the presidential visit had made any converts” of Reagan or his staff to the OIC anti-poverty model, an OIC administrator replied, “I don’t think so” (Kidder 1983).

Both Monestime and Prophète asserted Reagan ultimately “shut down” the Boston OIC program because of his negative reaction to seeing the disproportionately minority (and Haitian) trainee population. Although I cannot verify the timing of OIC’s eventual closure, and although neither Center founder admitted this directly, both Monestime and Prophète (as well as other Haitian OIC employees) were among those laid off around 1983.

Haitians perceived Reagan’s administrative policy decisions to be anti-minority, anti-poor, anti-immigrant, and anti-Haitian, preventing them from accessing the OIC social service programs that once provided a path toward economic security and social integration. Indeed, Murielle Estimé attributed OIC’s generosity to the benevolent policies under President Carter:

*ECJ:* When you arrived here did you work right away?

*ME:* No. I went to school. I went to school for almost a year . . . By this time, they had the school for immigrants. . . . You go to school and get your paycheck every Friday.

*ECJ:* Really? . . . They pay you to go to school?

*ME:* They pay you to go to school. You don’t pay, and every Friday, each student gets his paycheck.

*ECJ:* You’re kidding!!

*ME:* With Carter. . . . Jimmy Carter. This program ends with Ronald Reagan. That’s when we lose the opportunities.

The macropolitical and economic shifts from the 1970s to the 1980s discouraged the expansion of the “charitable state” (Wacquant 2009) and likely played a role in OIC’s eventual decline in Boston. Beyond the decline of the welfare state, the 1980s would pose tremendous difficulties for Haitians in terms of immigration policy (see Chapter 3), producing a sense of crisis in Greater Boston Haitians to which the Center’s founders responded. Nonprofit institutions increasingly assumed the “burden” of providing social welfare to the poor and other disadvantaged populations and would extend assistance to help establish the Center—but not without a cost.

#### FOUNDING THE CENTER AT ST. LEO’S

From mid-1981 to 1982, as Haitian immigrants and refugees increased and institutional opportunities to help them establish new lives diminished, Monestime, Prophète, and other founders began planning to create their own Haitian social service center. Among the early founders were René George from OIC, André Charles (a young Haitian college student and OIC volunteer living in the same

building as Prophète), Esther Lichtenstein (a woman the group met through Monestime's younger brother, Perard, a Catholic seminary student studying to become a priest), Monique Brun, who was a public school teacher, and a few others.<sup>18</sup> Perard Monestime had brought Lichtenstein to OIC to see the program and learn about Haitians' needs. She offered the group five thousand dollars to create a center "by Haitians, for Haitians." Each Sunday the group met in either Prophète's or Monestime's homes to draft a proposal, and the group eventually sought a space and additional financial support.

Although the group approached some Haitian Protestant churches for space, each requested rent, which would squander the limited funds in hand. The founders considered an abandoned building the City of Boston had sold for one dollar to another short-lived Haitian organization (Cecoama), but they felt the choice was too risky. The group approached St. Kevin's, where the St. Leo nuns had formerly resided, but space was unavailable. Ultimately, the Center found a permanent home at St. Leo Parish. As one founder reported, St. Leo's was a Haitian parish by the time the group began meeting, "and we had Father Jeannot. We were looking for a place with no money and went to see him."

According to Prophète, at the first meeting with Father Jeannot the group shared the troubles the Haitian OIC staff had had as well as the challenges of launching a social service program to serve "their own people." Although preferential access for Haitians could be considered "corrupt"—verifying external international and American depictions of Haitian institutions and professionals as lacking transparency and accountability—such tactics were "public secrets," likely arising from a moral economy rooted in critiques of structural injustices. They presented these events as evidence of bias in foreign and domestic policy against ethnic and racial minorities, and specifically, Haitians. In accepting how some founders' tactics at OIC curtailed Haitians' access to its social services, Jeannot's mercy reinforced a sense that St. Leo's was a space of cultural intimacy. At St. Leo's, where most founders once attended the Catholic Mass as parishioners, they found recognition and solidarity.

After the founders presented their Center proposal, Father Jeannot informed them it was timely because the nuns had a plan to open a formal daycare; furthermore, a parish council member and another woman parishioner had begun some informal English language programs. He suggested these efforts would be stronger if combined and offered space for a food pantry, clothing donations, classes, and other services. The group later met with the Haitian nuns. Acquiring archdiocesan approval was a last step before proceeding. Jeannot and Monestime met with Father Thomas Daily and other priests at the Chancery who agreed to provide administrative support, fundraising assistance, and a small stipend for volunteers.<sup>19</sup> Monestime became the first executive director.

The process of establishing the formal "Haitian Multi-Service Center" took a couple years. Each founder agreed that in 1984, the institution began to be presented as an autonomous program housed at St. Leo's under the umbrella

of the Archdiocese of Boston. Despite its structural location, the founders affirmed the Center was a secular, rather than faith-based, institution. From the beginning, it operated primarily with volunteer support. Founders used their own vehicles and personal resources to solicit donations of food and clothing from area businesses. ABCD, Inc., the nonprofit housing its Head Start daycare program at St. Leo's in the 1960s, returned the gift of early support by providing chairs and desks for the Center's "school." The sisters cared for the children of students who came to the ESL classes. When it came to day-to-day financial matters, Monestime and another founder managed accounts. The archdiocese allowed the Center to use its 501(c)(3) nonprofit legal status for grant proposals. The first corporate funding (four to five thousand dollars) came from the Boston Gas Company. Other early monies came from state budget earmarks for refugee resettlement that the Massachusetts Office of Refugee Resettlement (MORI), established in 1985, received from the federal government.<sup>20</sup> Monestime and Prophète soon began retrieving Haitian parolees—who had been granted asylee status and were released into their custody—from the Krome Service Processing Center in Miami.

#### BRANDING THE CENTER

In March 1984, after the death of Cardinal Humberto Medeiros—who had struggled with "reorganizing the archdiocese, reinvigorating the Church, paying off the monstrous debt, and . . . the agonizing ordeal of the city's racial problems" (O'Connor 1998: 304)—Bernard Francis Law, then bishop of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese in Missouri, was installed as archbishop of the Archdiocese of Boston (Glendon 2002: xxvi). In response to mounting debts accumulated under his predecessors and demographic changes necessitating the restructuring of existing parishes (O'Connor 1998: 306–9), Archbishop Law began reorganizing the archdiocese.<sup>21</sup> According to a Charity administrator present during this period, Law initiated a formal assessment of Catholic social service programs at roughly the same time. The results suggested a shift from a regional model of service delivery—in operation since a previous restructuring in 1971—to a more centralized management structure with CCAB, the Charity, as the lead agency. The reorganization would not only standardize the quality of services offered across the agency but also reduce administrative redundancies. The meaning of "quality," however, would become a point of contestation: in addition to "quality control," a former Center executive director claimed the reorganization was intended to ensure all Catholics and Catholic institutions adhered to an "orthodox" interpretation of Church tenets and conformed to the corporate Catholic culture Law attempted to inculcate.

In a move provoking mixed feelings in the Haitian community, the Center became one of four formerly semi-autonomous programs administered directly by the Chancery to be acquired by the Charity (CCAB 1995: 19). According to

some sources, the Charity was reluctant to manage the Center because it was not perceived to be “in the mold” of its other programs. But most of the early stakeholders with whom I have spoken (both Haitian and non-Haitian) felt the Charity “coveted” the public successes and social capital the Center had earned by the mid-1980s.

The Center’s visibility increased in the Boston media, especially in 1986, when Haitian president Jean-Claude Duvalier was ousted. The burgeoning Haitian community congregated at the Center and St. Leo’s as the political drama unfolded. During this period, a White employee lamented how Charity staff persons began to appear on-site for the first time to take photos of Haitian daycare children to be used for the Charity’s promotional purposes: “The prominence of the Haitian Multi-Service Center was attracting attention from Catholic Charities. The archdiocese wanted it moved under the auspices of Catholic Charities, and they [Catholic Charities] were using a lot of the pictures from our day care center to raise money.” On November 5, 1987, the Center was once again in the media, when Cardinal Law and Mayor Raymond Flynn (who had previously granted the Center \$219,000 to fund the basic English language program) jointly issued press statements on-site in support of undocumented migrants. Both Cardinal Law and Mayor Flynn criticized federal immigration reform measures:

Cardinal Bernard Law and Mayor Flynn, saying the federal amnesty program for aliens has been a failure, joined with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition yesterday in calling for an extension of the amnesty deadline next May. “The promise of the amnesty bill has not been fulfilled,” Law said at a news conference in the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Dorchester. Fear, he added, is keeping thousands from applying to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for legal status.<sup>22</sup>

Many of the Center’s clients were among the populations fearful of pursuing amnesty through the program. Nonetheless, the HMSC provided a visual backdrop against which Cardinal Law and Mayor Flynn addressed these political barriers to migrant incorporation.

What was particularly interesting, however, were the underlying racial politics embedded in the debate. Further analysis reveals additional symbolic roles the Center and its clients played not only in the archdiocese but also in city politics. Two weeks before the press conference, on October 23, 1987, Mayor Flynn testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, telling the committee members, “It is wrong that literally tens of thousands of young people from Ireland and other nations must today live shadow-like existences in our nation’s largest cities such as Boston, New York and Chicago—cities that their family members from previous generations helped to build” (Blake 1987). According to estimates made at the time, there were roughly equal numbers of “illegal” Irish and Haitian immigrants in Boston (Blake 1987). On October 1, the

city had opened the “Immigrant Rights Unit” aimed primarily at aiding undocumented Irish immigrants because of the city’s Irish heritage (although persons of other national backgrounds would be eligible). In response, David Johnson, one of only two European Americans who served as the HMSC Executive Director (ca. 1987–90), overlapping with Dr. Helene Hayes (ca. 1986–88), was publicly critical of the new program in a statement to the *New York Times*:

“To target the Irish has to do with race and is not helpful across the board,” said David E. Johnson, director of the Hatian [*sic*] Multiservice Center. “We have strong cultural and ancestral ties to Ireland but we also have strong business and foreign policy ties to Haiti and Central America.”<sup>23</sup>

Given Johnson’s critique of Boston’s program, it seems reasonable to assume the church and state officials also held the November press conference at the Center to demonstrate their respective accountability to undocumented persons of other racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds in Boston. Haitians (and the Center) became a visual representation of the care and advocacy these church and municipal leaders extended to undocumented migrants of color.

By the late 1980s, when it became clear the Charity would definitively acquire the Center, leaders in the Haitian community began meeting to discuss whether the merger could be stopped. The group received an appointment with a former Charity president, Dr. Joseph Doolin, to talk about the proposed merger.<sup>24</sup> Over the next fourteen years, until his resignation a few months after the 2003 Dorchester community service center sign unveiling ceremony, Doolin would play a pivotal and controversial role in the Center’s future. In July 1989, Doolin succeeded Rev. Richard J. Craig to become the first layperson to serve as president of the Charity. He came to the position not only with extensive experience in human services but also as an archdiocesan insider. The South Boston native had earned a doctorate in sociology and social work from Boston University and a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Massachusetts at Boston. For many years he had been a development officer for Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses, an organization founded when three settlement houses combined to offer education, health, human, and social services to area children, youth, and adults.<sup>25</sup> After leaving this position, he served ten years as an executive director of the Kit Clark House, a program that “provided health and social services for more than a third of Boston’s elderly,” including transportation, a mobile feeding program, and housing (Franklin 1989). Doolin next became the director of the Archdiocesan Office on Aging.

One Haitian Center stakeholder present at the meeting with Doolin described the occasion in terms that recalled Michael Herzfeld’s (1992) discussions of bureaucratic indifference. In his view, the “delegation” was neither accorded respect nor recognition. The feeling of humiliation this individual conveyed highlighted the limited civic power Haitians possessed, despite the many successes they and the Center had previously achieved:

*Delegate:* The people in the community were not too happy about [the proposed merger] and started to have big meetings [with] many people and many community leaders. . . . It was not quite totally clear that they [the Charity] were taking over at the beginning or quite right away. Because at the point there when [the community] finally realized that and people started to talk about . . . it in a way, trying to attract other people's attention and to start people talking about that. . . . I think it was a little after 1987 [*sic*]. . . . We had a delegation of people and went to meet with Doolin [*laughs ruefully and with chagrin*]. DOOLIN!! He was like, "Hunh, what are you talking about?" . . . He gave an impression that I was making up stories, and I was fabricating something, OK, because he "knows nothing about this."

*ECJ:* Did you believe him?

*Delegate:* I was shocked . . . that this gentleman didn't know anything about the existence of the Center. In other words, . . . it was like I was making a false claim! . . . I decided I didn't need to talk to him anymore and I walked away. I decided to stop giving money to the Center, too. Because whenever there [were events] for fundraising, I always gave something. . . . But these people . . .

Since Doolin only joined the Charity in 1989, it is possible he may not yet have been aware of the turmoil the impending transfer of the Center from the Chancery had caused in the Haitian community. Haitians perceived they were being cut off from the locus of pastoral power to which they previously had access by being in direct contact with archdiocesan administrators. In nearly all my interviews with Haitians, individual archdiocesan clergy were remembered fondly, especially Cardinal Law.

But there were other reasons for the community unrest over this transfer. One Center founder said in early conversations with Chancery clergy there had been an understanding the Center would ultimately become independent. This person likened the eventual transfer to the Charity as a betrayal of trust, and a deep violation of the blind faith this person had in the Church:

*Founder:* To the community, to us it was like dealing with God. It was like . . . believing in you, like, blind . . . you know that. If I am in the hand of God, what do I have to be afraid of? And then when I turn around and find out I was in the hands of . . . [*long pause*]. You know?! Then, ah, you become a different [person]. You become a different [person].

*ECJ:* In what ways do you become different?

*Founder:* [*Long pause*]

The way I used to see them, I can no longer in my whole life see them like that again. . . . They are different people now, probably. It's like, these people . . . are bringing God to me. They are the one's putting *l'Eucharistie* [the Eucharist] on my tongue. They are the ones putting the host on my tongue. And I told you that, we trust[ed] them like God.

A European American volunteer described how in the mid-1980s there was tremendous ambivalence between the Haitian and non-Haitian Center staff members seemingly rooted in racial and ethnic differences. Some staff members also felt they were not treated as “equals”—either as persons or as an organization—to other programs in the Charity network, which included having their own board of trustees, rather than having (at the time) a relatively weak advisory board:

My memory of this was that the board of directors, the board of trustees for Catholic Charities, was *the* board, so that they were the umbrella group, and that all we could have was an advisory board. And I think we began to have the advisory board . . . but . . . it just felt as though there was a power struggle a little bit with the desire for Catholic Charities to have [the Center], 'cause it was an attractive program right in the inner city—but then at the same time . . . I think that the staff, some of them . . . would have wanted their own board of directors. There was an ambivalent relationship. Dependent, hostile-dependent . . . and I didn't touch that one.

This same individual felt that the archdiocese, through the Charity, kept the Center in a position of tutelage or dependency, rather than support it to become independent. Possessing the Center and its clients was “useful”:

You know I did not know much about the other agencies and Haitian programs [outside the Charity network], but I believe the HMSC was the most stable and in the growth mode. And it was almost as though they were kept somewhat dependent on the archdiocese. And then when the archdiocese wanted to do a fundraising pamphlet or something, [it seemed as if they said,] “It would be very nice to have all of these beautiful little Haitian children in the picture.” . . . The Haitian staff that I worked with were very bright and they kind of got it that we only saw this . . . person with the camera once in two years or something. So, there was some of it, but I also think that it's the powerlessness of the Haitians that I perceived operating, and there would be a sensitivity to any suggestion that they couldn't run their own show.

After the acquisition, some Haitians felt that they as an ethnic immigrant group and the Center had lost independence (and social status). Others felt the move engendered greater stability and financial support. These tensions solidified in the institutional relationships among the Church, Charity, and Center over the next decade, and would erupt into disputes in the media around issues of sex, sexuality, and Catholic social teachings.