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*Catholic Interracialism in New Orleans, 1930-1980: A Historical Survey with
Implications for the Post-Katrina Moment*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

Elyse Banks

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The Dissertation of Elyse Banks is approved:

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Acting Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	iv
Abstract	vi
Acknowledgements	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Federated Colored Catholics and the Development of Catholic Social Justice, 1917-1939	30
Chapter 2: Catholic Interracial Organizing and the Desegregation of New Orleans Parochial Schools, 1950-1965	116
Chapter 3: The Associated Catholic Charities and the Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in New Orleans East	190
Chapter 4: Hurricane Katrina and the Catholic Church: Toward Interracial Cooperation	243
Bibliography	286

Abbreviations

ACC	Associated Catholic Charities
ASWPL	Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations
BNOB	Bring New Orleans Back Commission
CCHR	Catholic Council on Human Relations
CCIA	Catholic Clergy Conference on the Interracial Apostolate
CCS	Catholic Conference of the South
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CIC	Women's Committee of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation
CIC	Catholic Interracial Council
CICNY	Catholic Interracial Council of New York
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DEQ	Department of Environmental Quality
FCC	Federated Colored Catholics
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
IATF	Interagency Task Force
LIRS	Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
MQVC	Mary Queen of Vietnam Church
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NBCC	National Black Catholic Congress
NBCCC	National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus
NBCSA	National Black Catholic Seminarians Association
NBLCC	National Black Lay Catholic Caucus
NBSC	National Black Sisters Conference
NCCIJ	National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice
NCCM	National Catholic Council of Men
NCCW	National Catholic Council of Women
NCIF	National Catholic Interracial Federation
NCWC	National Catholic Welfare Conference
NOBC	National Office for Black Catholics
SCHW	Southern Conference for Human Welfare
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Committee
SNCC	Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee
ULGNO	Urban League of Greater New Orleans
UNAVASA	Union of North American Vietnamese Students Associations
UNO	University of New Orleans
USCC	United States Catholic Conference
WPA	Works Progress Administration
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Abstract: *Catholic Interracialism in New Orleans, 1930-1980: A Historical Survey with Implications for the Post-Katrina Moment*

Elyse Banks

The actions of the church today, in particular the possibility and limitations of a Catholic interracial program, may be understood as part of a longer historical process of interracial activism in the Catholic church. Explorations of that history in turn provide insight into the complex racial and political order in the city today. In the early 1930s, black Catholic layman Thomas Wyatt Turner called for a national black Catholic organization to represent the voices of black Catholics in the struggle for racial equality. For Turner, blacks needed to be the architects of the movement for racial justice in the Church. Ultimately, the Church's decision to temper their approach to racial justice resulted in the repression of Turner's organization, the Federated Colored Catholics, and black self-determination in the Church more generally. By the 1940s, blacks were still attending racially segregated Catholic Churches in New Orleans where the Catholic interracial movement found its strongest supporters. In this period, while some prominent blacks did have a say in the trajectory of the Church's social action plan, they were still underrepresented at interracial social action meetings. As the Catholic church in New Orleans struggled to implement the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) in the 1950s and 60s, black Catholics once again asked that they be the architects of their own liberation, but once again they were underrepresented. In the 1970s when the Associated Catholic Charities resettled thousands of Vietnamese refugees in New Orleans East, the Church disregarded the impact their resettlement efforts would have on an already

economically and politically bereft city. Blacks argued that the economic assistance the Catholic Church provided the Vietnamese community was not the same assistance they offered the black community. In this period, black Catholics reinvigorated by the Black Power movement began to call for the creation of black Catholic clerical and lay organizations. At this point, blacks were done asking for a seat at the table, now they demanded one.

In other words, a complete history of Catholic interracial organizing must necessarily include a discussion of the black Catholic response. Although the Church stumbled to model true racial inclusion in much of the twentieth century, by the twenty-first century, the destruction and suffering left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina allowed the Church to come full circle in its implementation of a Catholic interracial program. Post-Katrina, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, not only provided much needed social services, but it also successfully mediated conflicts between residents and the local and state governments. The Church bridged racial divides through religious worship and verbally committed itself to ensuring that the ‘new’ New Orleans would remain racially and economically diverse. While scholars have glorified specific periods of the Catholic interracial movement arguing that it achieved some change, but ended after integration in the 1960s, my study purports that it has in fact continued well into the twenty-first century. In this post-Katrina moment, the church’s Catholic interracial plan has proven more successful than at any other time in its attempted implementation, in significant part because of black Catholic activism.

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First and foremost, the completion of my dissertation would not have been possible without the labor and emotional support of my dissertation committee members. Eric Porter, David Brundage and Alice Yang, I would like to thank you for your unwavering assistance over the course of this long process. Thank you for believing in me when I lost faith in the process. Your encouragement has meant more than words can truly express. Other faculty members who aided in my development as a scholar and instructor were Catherine Jones, Lynn Westerkamp, Matthew Lasar and Greg O'Malley. Thank you for showing me what it means to be a well-rounded instructor--one that is there for their students inside and outside of the classroom.

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I would also like to thank the many archivists who helped me gather pages upon pages of material for my study. Special thanks to Michael Courtney for guiding me through the lengthy collections housed at the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Thank you to Deputy Director Christopher Harter for helping me navigate the numerous collections held at the Amistad Research Center. The assistance I received from the library staff at Xavier University proved invaluable in locating materials pertinent to my dissertation. Special thanks to Ms. Ida E. Jones for helping me weed through the Thomas Wyatt Turner Papers stored at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center on the Howard University Campus, and to Mr. William Offhause, Senior Staff Assistant at the University of Buffalo for helping me sift through the Vietnamese Immigration Collection.

The old southern proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child,” really rings true when taking into consideration the sacrifices my family has made while I’ve been on this journey. I would like to thank my mother for keeping me motivated throughout the dissertation by way of sternly worded phone calls, and my brother for constantly reminding me of my end goal and then holding me accountable to it. A special thanks to my aunts, uncles and cousins for dealing with my absence from annual family functions, and their resounding question of, “are you done yet,” when I finally made an appearance. Without a solid foundation, I would not have made it this far. Last, but

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Introduction

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst storms the Gulf Coast had ever experienced, made landfall in New Orleans, flooding 80% of the city. In the aftermath of the storm, the media raised questions regarding responsibility both for the disaster and the racialized and classist responses in its wake. The state's long history of residential segregation and racialized repression led to the creation and proliferation of regions of vulnerability. These particular regions, situated below sea level, were populated with the poorest and darkest residents, the worst schools, and subpar public housing. The state's failure to warn its citizens of the ferocity and strength of the storm and the federal government's slow and unsympathetic response in its aftermath, revealed the complicated historical intersections of race, space, and power.¹

In the storm's wake, Michael Brown, the head of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), blamed state and local officials for failing to manage the evacuation process; he called this failure the "tipping point," which led to "all the other things that either went wrong or were exacerbated."² Brown stated, "In my opinion, it's the responsibility of faith-based organizations, of churches and charities

¹ K. Animashaun Ducre, "Hurricane Katrina as an Elaboration on an Ongoing Theme: Racialized Spaces in Louisiana," in *Seeking Higher Ground: The Hurricane Katrina Crisis, Race and Public Policy Reader*, eds. Manning Marable and Kristen Clarke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 66.

² Chris Russil and Chad Lavin, "From Tipping Point to Meta-Crisis: Management, Media, and Hurricane Katrina," in *The Neo-Liberal Deluge* ed. Cedric Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 11.

and others to help those people.”³ Although this quote-exemplified Brown’s attempt to displace blame, it also raised a pertinent question: What has been the history of faith-based organizations, particularly the Catholic church, in responding to racial discrimination and economic injustice in New Orleans? While it is clear from Brown’s comment that he was referring to all faith-based organizations, my work focuses on the role of the Catholic Church among the range of religious institutions that responded to such phenomena in the wake of Katrina. The large size of New Orleans’ black Catholic population as well as the central role the Catholic Church has played in the history and development of the city makes a discussion of the Catholic Church’s racial program indispensable to the longer story of black struggle in the city.

Although the Catholic Church witnessed unprecedented damage to their church and school infrastructures as a consequence of Katrina’s high waters and heavy winds, church officials were still among a small group of first responders.⁴ National and local church organizations provided crucial social services to storm victims from the hardest hit areas of the city. For instance, officials from the National Office of Black Catholics ventured from their headquarters in Washington DC to New Orleans to assist in any way they could. Local organizations, Catholic Charities, Christopher Homes, St. Peter Claver/Ujamaa Community Development Corp., St. Joseph’s/Tulane Canal Center for Disease Control and Reconcile New Orleans,

³ Ibid., 11.

⁴ Donald E. Devore, “Water in Sacred Places: Rebuilding New Orleans Black Churches as Sites of Community Empowerment.” *The Journal of American History*, 94 (Dec. 2007): 763-764.

united to launch a five-year housing plan that would begin the work of constructing mixed-income housing. Smaller Catholic affiliates, such as Mary Queen of Vietnam Parish Church, the Hispanic Apostolate, and the Sisters of the Holy Family, also participated in the effort; these organizations exemplified the diversity of the Church's social welfare organizations.⁵

In the months following the storm, members of the clergy expressed their belief that the floodwaters of Katrina had laid bare endemic racial discrimination present in the city prior to the storm. In December, three months after Katrina made landfall, New Orleans Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes completed a pastoral letter on racial harmony. Hughes asserted, "The painful suffering that gripped us along with the devastating flood water has brought home the still unaddressed issues which weigh heavily upon us."⁶ Hughes recognized that the church's early inability to prioritize a discussion of the city's housing deficit, the troubled New Orleans' public school system, racial barriers that prevented economic mobility among marginalized groups, as well as the many failures of civic, governmental, and church leadership in confronting these problems before the storm, paved the way for further entrenchment of these issues in the post-Katrina moment.

According to Archbishop Hughes, African Americans seemed to confront the greatest obstacles in returning to the city after Katrina. The Archbishop lauded the

⁵ Ron Brocato, "Catholic Entities Band Together to Launch Housing Efforts," *Clarion Herald*, May 6, 2006, 6.

⁶ Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, S.T.D., "A Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony," *Clarion Herald*, December 16, 2006, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

city's vibrant Vietnamese community, who found itself "outside the civic decision-making structure" following the storm, and who had nevertheless "manifested a remarkable community resolve not only to rebuild, but also to protest environmental racism evidenced in the city's plan to dump toxic debris near their neighborhoods."⁷ Based on the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, which convened from 1962-1965, Hughes argued that "every form of social or cultural discrimination of fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion must be curbed or eradicated as incompatible with God's design."⁸ The church defined racism as both a personal sin and social disorder— a social and institutional ill. Hughes closed his pastoral letter with a section entitled, "Repentance, Forgiveness and Healing," in which he apologized for, "the way in which I or other members of the Church have acted or failed to act."⁹ Throughout his letter, Hughes sought "to acknowledge the past in truth" by discussing the Archdiocese of New Orleans' wavering response to racism. In doing so, he hoped to "seek forgiveness and recommit" to "realizing the Gospel message in our relations with one another."¹⁰

Archbishop Hughes' argument concerning the need to improve race relations in the city through the use of Catholic education, prayer, and action was not a new

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

⁹ Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, S.T.D., "A Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony," *Clarion Herald*, December 16, 2006, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

idea. For much of the twentieth century, Catholic interracialism had served as the guide for Catholic social action and policy. Catholic interracialism is the application of Catholic moral principles in action or policy to create better race relations and promote racial justice, and it became the church's main method of confronting the most pressing issue of the period: the color-line.

Although interracial activity did occur in the period prior to 1937, as evidenced in the approach of secular groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and local urban leagues, this activity had yet to be articulated from a Catholic perspective. Jesuit Priest John LaFarge was the first to expound upon the idea in his 1937 canonical work titled, *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations*. His text outlined the approach of the Catholic Church to combat race prejudice and to establish social justice in interracial activity. The church approached the problem of race relations from a moral perspective rather than a political, psychological, historical, or anthropological one. Ultimately, the church was seeking more than a mere theoretical solution to the problem; it was concerned with creating a practical program for interracial justice and action.¹¹

The ethical doctrine of human rights and the theological doctrine of universality formed the theoretical basis for the Catholic Church's interracial program. The church constructed a moral program for race relations from both

¹¹ John LaFarge, *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations* (New York: America Press, 1937), 1-9.

doctrinal and factual materials, which included biblical texts, official pronouncements of the church, canon law, political, social, cultural, and constitutional histories of the United States and the Catholic Church, as well as documented activities of other interracial organizations, such as the NAACP and the National Urban League. Catholic interracialists believed that interracial activity was best promoted by small groups of industrious and informed black and white Catholics working in tandem under capable spiritual direction. The Catholic interracial program did not promote social protest but rather proposed a subdued approach to social justice, which included methods of prayer, living by example, and direct/constructive action. Catholic interracialists sought to sway the minds of and hearts of those opposed to racial justice.¹²

By the late twentieth century, liberal whites as well as black Catholics began to see the approach as too gradual and cautious, ultimately because they observed it to be relatively ineffectual at creating change. The varying levels of success and failure of the approach in the twentieth century can be explained by several factors. First, black and white Catholic interracialists often had divergent views concerning the degree of importance placed on black self-determination within the framework of interracial justice. Black Catholic activists in the twentieth did not see Catholic interracialism and black self-determination as mutually exclusive visions in this period but rather believed that both could exist in tandem. Black Catholics believed they could work with white Catholics while still maintaining leadership and control of

¹² Ibid., 1-9.

the overall process and narrative of black struggle. Although LaFarge proposed that the program of Catholic interracial justice “shows the Negro as a constructive agent” and not as a “pitiful object of charity,” the practical application of interracial justice privileged the leadership of clergy, who in this period were predominantly white.¹³ Although these white clergy members were liberal in thought, their commitment to black self-determination, evidenced in their behavior, differed substantially from that of their fellow black Catholics involved in the same program for interracial justice.

White and black Catholic also differed with regard to the speed of Catholic interracialism in effecting lasting racial change. Here, is it important to think about the story of Catholic interracialism as a battle between hegemonic and insurgent articulations of interracial justice. While black Catholics remained outspokenly committed to immediate racial equality within the framework of Catholic interracial action, white clergy cautioned against moving too fast and protesting too loudly for black inclusion. For instance, at the final black Catholic Congress held in the late 19th century, Father John R. Slattery stated, “Two powerful factors, whose influence for good can never be realized, are working in favor of the colored race. They are Time and Silence.” He asserted that blacks must, “get along with their neighbors...that they have everything to gain by patient forbearance, and much to lose by hurry and temper.”¹⁴ Thomas Wyatt Turner, a black Catholic activist of the period, conversely stated, “I urge the discontinuance of segregation in Church and School. I do hereby

¹³ Ibid., 19, 190.

¹⁴ Cyprian Davis, O.S.B, *Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroads, 1990), 192.

urge the committee on resolutions to take the matter up at once and prayerfully beg the Church Officials to heed out appeal because they are sewing [sic] the seeds of discontent in every section of the land.”¹⁵

Lastly, the successes and failures of Catholic interracialism came as a result of the broader social climate of the period. Although the Catholic church appeared to be an insular group, the impact of outside forces and societal pressures on the development of its social justice plan cannot be downplayed. An important part of the Catholic interracial program for social justice necessitated cooperation with non-Catholic agencies and groups dedicated to interracial justice. When, in the early twentieth century, social justice groups such as the NAACP and the National Urban League, committed themselves to interracial activity, the Catholic church created its own interracial program for social justice. In the late twentieth century, when the importance of interracial activity decreased for secular groups, such as Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and they adopted a program committed to racial self-determination, the church followed suit.¹⁶

The actions of the church today, in particular the possibility and limitations of a Catholic interracial program, may be understood as part of a longer historical process of interracial activism in the Catholic church. Explorations of that history in

¹⁵ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 57.

¹⁶ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

turn provide insight into the complex racial and political order in the city today. In the early 1930s, black Catholic layman Thomas Wyatt Turner called for a national black Catholic organization to represent the voices of black Catholics in the struggle for racial equality. For Turner, blacks needed to be the architects of the movement for racial justice in the Church. Ultimately, the Church's decision to temper their approach to racial justice resulted in the repression of Turner's organization, the Federated Colored Catholics, and black self-determination in the Church more generally. By the 1940s, blacks were still attending racially segregated Catholic Churches in New Orleans where the Catholic interracial movement found its strongest supporters. In this period, while some prominent blacks did have a say in the trajectory of the Church's social action plan, they were still underrepresented at interracial social action meetings. As the Catholic church in New Orleans struggled to implement the Brown v. Board of Education decision (1954) in the 1950s and 60s, black Catholics once again asked that they be the architects of their own liberation, but once again they were underrepresented. In the 1970s when the Associated Catholic Charities resettled thousands of Vietnamese refugees in New Orleans East, the Church disregarded the impact their resettlement efforts would have on an already economically and politically bereft city. Blacks argued that the economic assistance the Catholic Church provided the Vietnamese community was not the same assistance they offered the black community. In this period, black Catholics reinvigorated by the Black Power movement began to call for the creation of black Catholic clerical and

lay organizations. At this point, blacks were done asking for a seat at the table, now they demanded one.

In other words, a complete history of Catholic interracial organizing must necessarily include a discussion of the black Catholic response. Although the Church stumbled to model true racial inclusion in much of the twentieth century, by the twenty-first century, the destruction and suffering left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina allowed the Church to come full circle in its implementation of a Catholic interracial program. Post-Katrina, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, not only provided much needed social services, but it also successfully mediated conflicts between residents and the local and state governments. The Church bridged racial divides through religious worship and verbally committed itself to ensuring that the ‘new’ New Orleans would remain racially and economically diverse. While scholars have glorified specific periods of the Catholic interracial movement arguing that it achieved some change, but ended after integration in the 1960s, my study purports that it has in fact continued well into the twenty-first century. In this post-Katrina moment, the church’s Catholic interracial plan has proven more successful than at any other time in its attempted implementation, in significant part because of black Catholic activism.

Historiography

Although the Catholic Church applied Catholic interracialism in both the North and South with contrasting degrees of success, scholars have tended to discuss the development of Catholic interracial justice as two separate regional stories rather

than to examine how the development of what became a national program had varying degrees of success at the local level. To approach the discussion of the development of Catholic interracialism in the Catholic church from a regional perspective limits the field of scope and inquiry. However, by broadening the purely bounded regional approach to include what regional studies scholars have termed critical regionalism, one can gain a better perspective from which to understand the impact of the national development of twentieth century Catholic interracialism on cities across the U.S. and conversely the impact of external movements on its evolution. I agree with scholar Douglas R. Powell, who stated, “because of its inherent sense of geographical scope, a region, can never, ultimately be an isolated space, withdrawn from larger cultural forces and processes.” Thus, “a region is not a thing so much as a cultural history, an ongoing rhetorical and poetic construction.”¹⁷ Therefore, only a discussion of the development of Catholic interracialism that connects the local to the national and national to the local can achieve the aim of comprehending the national development of Catholic interracialism.

While developing a critical regionalist perspective, my discussion of Catholic interracialism in New Orleans draws upon and contributes to four primary historiographical conversations: those pertaining to the Catholic church, immigration, African American history and post-Katrina New Orleans. The evolution of Catholic

¹⁷ Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); *Regional Rhetorics: Real and Imagined Spaces*, ed. Jenny Rice, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, (June 20, 2014): 15.

interracial doctrine and practice and the Catholic church's response to racial injustice and immigration are the main focus. The existing literature on the development of social justice in the Catholic church falls into three categories; parish and regional specific histories, the development of Catholic interracialism as doctrine and practice, and stories of Catholic social action as they pertain to race and immigration. Parish and regional specific histories emphasize the establishment and development of a singular city parish or a particular region in the country. Gary W. McDonough's, *Black and Catholic in Savannah Georgia*, and Morris J. MacGregor's, *The Emergence of a Black Community: St. Augustine's in Washington* are exemplars of this line of inquiry. Authors of these works that examine the social histories of a single parish across a small scope of time rarely take their discussion beyond the boundaries of the parish or region in question.¹⁸

Father Cyprian Davis published a groundbreaking text in 1990 titled, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, which provided a comprehensive history of black Catholics in the United States from Africa to the mid-twentieth century and became a foundational text for black Catholic studies. His work provided

¹⁸ Gary Wray McDonough, *Black and Catholic in Savannah, Georgia* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1993); Morris J. MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999); Danny Duncan Collum, *Black and Catholic in the Jim Crow South: The Stuff that Makes Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006); Andrew S. Moore, *The South's Intolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945-1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento and the Catholic Church: Shaping a Capital* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008); James M. Woods, *A History of the American Catholic Church* (Greenville: University Press of Florida 2011).

an excellent overview of black Catholic involvement in the struggle for racial equality in the Catholic church. For black Catholics in New Orleans during the early years of Jim Crow, Catholicism became a method for protesting the imposition of segregation in Catholic churches and in society at large. Expanding on Davis' base study, James Bennett's *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow* (2005) extended the discussion of black Catholic social action to include black resistance of institutionalized racism in New Orleans during the Jim Crow period.¹⁹ Bennett revealed that the actual practice of segregation in New Orleans did not begin immediately after the Jim Crow laws went into effect in 1896 due to the legacy of interracial exchange in the city. Ronald Devore's 2015 text *Defying Jim Crow* picks up from where Bennett left off by discussing how blacks adjusted to Jim Crow from 1900-1960 in New Orleans. Although his entire book did not place exclusive focus on the evolution and response to Catholic interracialism itself, his chapter on the "Religious Dimensions of Community Development," was comprehensive in its discussion of both Protestant and Catholic response to Jim Crow in the city.²⁰

Canonical texts examining the civil rights movement often leave the contributions of black Catholics out of the narrative of the black struggle for civil rights even though social changes in the Catholic church mirrored those of the larger Protestant-led civil rights movement. Adam Fairclough's text, *Race and Democracy:*

¹⁹ James Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²⁰ Donald E. Devore, *Defying Jim Crow: African American Community Development and the Struggle for Racial Equality in New Orleans, 1900-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 62-91.

The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972, also was thorough in its inclusion of the history of racial change in the Catholic church within the larger framework of the civil rights movement in Louisiana, but it does not examine the role of Catholics in the civil rights struggle more broadly.

We get a better sense of black Catholic contributions to civil rights in works focusing on black Catholic lay activism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Gary B. Agee's 2011 study of black Catholic activist Daniel Rudd and his black Catholic congresses of the late nineteenth century are characteristic of the scholarship on black Catholic lay activism in the Church. *A More Noble Cause* by A.P. Tureaud and Rachel L. Emanuel documents A.P. Tureaud's legal struggle for civil rights in Louisiana during the long fight to end racial segregation in the state. Tureaud, a professed Catholic and member of the Catholic fraternal order the Knights of Peter Claver, focused his attempts to end segregation in the courts of Louisiana as a lawyer for the NAACP.²¹ Although black Catholics remained outside of the larger Protestant-led civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, these texts highlight their contributions to the struggle for black equality in the Catholic church during the period. These works serve as a reminder that black Catholics resisted racial segregation and discrimination by using similar methods, such as courts, protest, and print, as their Protestant counterparts did.

²¹ Gary B. Agee, *A Cry for Justice: Daniel Rudd and His Life in Black Catholicism: Journalism and Activism, 1854-1933* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2011); Rachel L. Emanuel and Alexander O. Tureaud Jr., *A More Noble Cause: A.P. Tureaud and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

Several studies have documented the evolution of Catholic interracialism in the US. Studies on the evolution and viability of Catholic interracial organizing have increased over the past several years as a consequence of early twentieth century liberal Jesuit priest John LaFarge's theories on the topic.²² In 1968, Marilyn Wenske Nickels published her groundbreaking biography on black Catholic lay activist Thomas Wyatt Turner and the evolution of the Catholic interracial doctrine.²³ In it she discussed three competing visions of racial justice proposed by Turner and Jesuit priests John LaFarge and William Markoe. Since the publication of her manuscript, several scholars have expanded Nickels' discussion of Catholic interracialism and the Catholic interracial movement, which was prominent from 1933 until the early 1960s.²⁴

These studies concern themselves primarily with the viability of the method in a specific period of time. Studies on Catholic interracialism have narrowly focused on the development of Catholic interracialism with little attention paid to the critiques of the doctrine and method, while others have treated its emergence as a natural progression of Church organizing. David W. Southern's piece entitled, *John LaFarge*

²² John LaFarge, *Interracial Justice: A Study of Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations* (New York: America Press, 1937).

²³ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988).

²⁴ Cyprian Davis, *History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990); David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of the Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Bryan Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (New York: Orbis, 2010); John Alberts, "Origins of Black Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1718-1920," (dissertation, University of New Orleans, 1990), 376.

and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism focused on “illuminating the many ironies, paradoxes, ambiguities, and dilemmas surrounding the long fight against racial injustice that LaFarge and his associates waged.”²⁵ Southern conveyed an awareness of the voids apparent in his analysis as he concluded his introduction with, “a comprehensive look at black Catholics per se was beyond the scope of this already substantial project,” for the, “sources on black Catholics are scattered and elusive.”²⁶ R. Bentley Anderson’s 2011 study, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism* extended this discussion by highlighting the successes of two interracial organizations in the 1940s: the Catholic Council on Human Relations and the Southeastern Regional Interracial Commission.²⁷ Although interracialists focused on their goal of desegregation and racial inclusion in both the church and nation, clergy and secular forces ultimately thwarted many of their attempts at racial redress. Anderson concluded his study with the assertion that through Catholic interracial organizing “American Catholicism has promoted, fostered, and confronted racism in the United States.”²⁸

These works concluded their analysis of Catholic interracial activism in the late 1950s or early 1960s, when the effectiveness of Catholic interracialism began to decline. My study extends their analysis by examining Catholic interracialism into the

²⁵ David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1996), xix.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xx.

²⁷ R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), xiii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xviii.

late 1960s and 70s, when the proliferation of black Catholic organizations exemplified a shift away from Catholic interracialism to black self-determination. A similar shift within the larger civil rights movement, which I argue acted as the catalyst for change in the Catholic church, occurred in groups such as SNCC and CORE.²⁹ In the late 1960s, these organizations were at the forefront of this tactical shift, which ended in the expulsion of whites from both organizations. The overlap here highlights the impact of the black freedom movement on the development of social activism in the Catholic Church. I argue that the shift from interracialism to black self-determination among African American Catholics mirrored the shift from interracialism to black self-determination that took place in the larger black freedom movement. Extending the examination of Catholic social action into the late 1960s and 70s, when the proliferation of black Catholic organizations exemplified a shift away from Catholic interracialism to black self-determination, necessitates a sharper focus on the impact of social action outside of the Catholic church on the trajectory of Catholic social action within the church.³⁰ It illuminates a period in the history of the

²⁹ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Orissa Arend, *Showdown in Desire: The Black Panther Take a Stand in New Orleans* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2009); Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Nishani Frazier, *Harambe City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2017); Phil Noble, *Beyond the Burning Bus: The Civil Rights Revolution in a Southern Town* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2003); Kent B. Germany, *New Orleans After the Promise: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007).

³⁰ Eric Tang, "A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (March 2011): 117-149.

archdiocese when the Catholic church could not remain outside of the larger struggle for racial equality.

In the post-Katrina moment, historians have taken a renewed interest in the discussion of immigration, migration, and ethnic communities in the Crescent city as they discuss population shifts.³¹ A 2008 edited collection entitled, *Immigrants Outside Megalopolis: Ethnic Transformations in the Heartland* expanded the number of the racial groups under examination. The collection addressed the interaction between two main processes, “the formation of cultural landscapes and the negotiation of socio-economic adjustment, for particular immigrant nationalities in specific U.S. cities.”³² In his introduction, Jones posited that these immigrant groups have not simply created new cultural landscapes but they have also, “created landscapes of conflict and suffering as the immigrants and their hosts adjust to each other.”³³ With this said, a discussion of the religious dimensions of immigration to New Orleans must take on a new trajectory that includes an investigation of the Catholic sponsored Vietnamese resettlement program of the 1970s and the impact of

³¹ Several great works on early immigration to New Orleans include Carl L. Bankston, “New People in the New South: An Overview of Southern Immigration.” *Southern Cultures* 47 (2007): 24-44; Natalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); John B. Strait, Gand Gong and Cherisha N. Williams, “Rubbing Elbows in the Big Easy: The Dynamics of Residential Segregation Among Racial and Ethnic Groups in New Orleans, Louisiana, 1900-2000,” *Southeastern Geographer* (2007): 254-282 and *Latino Workers in the Contemporary South* eds. Arthur D. Murphy, Colleen Blanchard, and Jennifer A. Hill (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

³² *Immigrants Outside Megalopolis: Ethnic Transformation in the Heartland* ed. Richard C. Jones (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 4.

this resettlement on pre-existing black (Catholic) communities. What must also be taken into consideration is the increase in the number of day laborers, migrants, and immigrant guest workers from Mexico and other countries in Latin America. The Catholic Church responded to labor exploitation following Hurricane Katrina by uniting with grassroots interracial organizations, such as the Alliance of Guest Workers for Dignity and the Congress of Day Laborers.³⁴ There are a number of key books and articles that chart the progression of Vietnamese immigration to the port city. These excellent studies provide the foundation for my discussion of the Catholic resettlement programs of the late twentieth century. However, there is a void in the literature on black and Vietnamese interactions in the 70s and 80s.³⁵

The final body of literature pertinent to my project is recent scholarship on the Hurricane Katrina. Scholarship on Katrina originates among a number of distinct

³⁴ Matt Olson, "Two Years Katrina Workers Center Organizes Day Laborers in New Orleans, September 29, 2007, <http://www.labornotes.org>.

³⁵ There are a number of excellent books on the relationship between Vietnamese and the Catholic Church. Peter C. Phan, *Vietnamese-American Catholics* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005); Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo ed., *Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007); *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*, eds. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Slatzman Chafetz (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000); Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Vietnam," in *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965*, ed. Mary C. Waters and Reed Ueda with Helen B. Marrow (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 652-7; Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications," *Sociological Review* 66 (April 2001): 269-288; Carl Bankston III and Min Zhou, "De Facto Congregationalism and Socioeconomic Mobility in Laotian and Vietnamese Immigrant Communities: A Study of Religious and Vietnamese Immigrant Communities: A Study of Religious Institutions and Economic Change," *Review of Religious Research* 41 (Jun. 2000): 453-470; and Carl Bankston III, "Vietnamese-American Catholicism: Transplanted and Flourishing" *Asian-American Catholics* (Winter 2000): 36-53.

disciplines, such as sociology, religious studies, environmental history, and anthropology. These works have charted the progression of the relief effort in New Orleans, the reaction of the state and the federal governments during the hurricane, as well as the class and racial dynamics of the disaster. My project draws on a number of these recent studies on the intersections of Hurricane Katrina, race, and public policy and argues that the slow state and federal response provided an impetus for economic and social organizing across racial lines. Several anthologies on the post-Katrina climate in the city lay a solid foundation for my explication of the Catholic Church in post-Katrina New Orleans. *In the Wake of Hurricane Katrina, Seeking Higher Ground, There is no Such Thing as a Natural Disaster* and *Neo-liberal Deluge* all bring together articles that examine race, class, and policy in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and are excellent examples of this trend in Katrina scholarship.³⁶ Using these works as the backdrop for my examination, my work is particularly positioned within

³⁶ Felice Batlan, "Weathering the Storm Together (Torn Apart by Race, Gender, and Class)" *NWSA Journal* 20 (2008): 163-184; *Hurricane Katrina: Response and Responsibilities*, ed. John Brown Childs (Santa Cruz: New Pacific Press, 2005); *There is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina*, eds. Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squire (New York: Routledge, 2006); *The Neo-liberal Deluge, Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism and the remaking of New Orleans*, eds. Cedric Johnson (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2011); In the Wake of Hurricane Katrina: New Paradigms and Social Visions, *American Quarterly* 60 (Sept. 2009); Rachel Luft, "Looking for Common Ground: Relief Work in Post-Katrina New Orleans as an American Parable of Race and Gender Violence," *NWSA Journal* 20 (2008): 5-31; Ruth Salvaggio, "Forgetting New Orleans," *The Southern Literary Journal* 40 (2008): 305-316; Aoife Naughton and Wes Wallace, "Day Laborers in the Reconstruction of New Orleans," *Callaloo* 29 (2006): 1372-1388; Adeline, Masquelier, "Why Katrina's Victims Aren't Refugees: Mussings on a "Dirty" Word," *American Anthropologist* 108 (2006): 735-743; *Louisiana Beyond Black & White: New Interpretations of Twentieth-Century Race and Race Relations*, ed. Michael S. Martin (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011).

in the slowly emerging literature on the Hurricane Katrina and religious recovery in the city. Historian Donald Devore, author of the article “Water in Sacred Places: Rebuilding New Orleans Black Churches as sites of Community Empowerment,” is among the few scholars who wrote about the impact of Hurricane Katrina on Churches in New Orleans. Other articles have come by way of Catholic newspapers, the most notable of which are “Waterproof: How New Orleans Faith Endured Katrina,” in the *U.S. Catholic Magazine* and, “Catholics and Katrina: The Role of the Church in the Region’s Recovery,” in the *National Catholic Review*.³⁷

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1: The Federated Colored Catholics and the development of Catholic Social Justice, 1917-1939

My study consists of four chapters, which span from 1917 to the post-Katrina moment of 2006. Chapter 1 covers a wave of Catholic racial activism that emerged as a result of the Church’s imposition of Jim Crow and the poor treatment of black Catholics during World War I. As early as 1913, black Catholic layman from Maryland, Thomas Wyatt Turner, penned letters to the Church hierarchy urging them to take a stand on racial discrimination and segregation in the Catholic Church. He founded the Committee Against the Extension of Race Prejudice in the Catholic

³⁷ Kristen Hannum, “Waterproof: How New Orleans Faith Endured Katrina,” *U.S. Catholic Magazine* 80, no. 8 (Aug. 2015): 12-17; Other articles to consider include, Peter Finney Jr., “New Orleans Archdiocese: Forever Changed by Hurricane Katrina,” *Catholic New Service* (Aug. 29, 2015); Matt Malone, “Catholic and Katrina: The Role of the Church in the Region’s Recovery,” *The National Catholic Review* (Sept. 25, 2006).

Church in 1919 and later changed the name to the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics. From this group, Turner established the Federation of Colored Catholics (FCC) in 1925. The organization considered themselves a federation of black societies and black parishes, a force that formed a national black Catholic front. Theoretical differences among the groups' white and black leadership concerning the organizational approach and structure split the organization in early 1930s. Thus, what began as a philosophical debate among three men over the meaning and extent of interracial co-operation in the 1930s, ended in the national decline of black Catholic led activism in the North and South until the late 1960s. In its place, liberal Jesuit priest Rev. John LaFarge established the Catholic Interracial Council in New York, which would serve as the base for national interracial movement.³⁸ Although the story of the development of Thomas Wyatt Turner's FCC takes place primarily in the North and upper South, the demise of the organization, inevitably affected the development of black Catholic organizing in the Deep South. In the period of the federation's existence from 1925-1952, Turner faced certain regional limitations that inhibited him from having a real impact on black Catholic conditions in the South.

Chapter 2: Catholic Interracial Organizing and the Desegregation of New Orleans Parochial Schools, 1950-1965

³⁸ Ronald L. Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States: A Historical Chronology," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no.1 (Winter 1994): 128-129.

The Catholic church thought that Catholic interracialism, which emphasized Catholic education, charity, social justice and an overall gradual move toward racial integration, would usher the church into an era of racial harmony in the 1950s. By the 1960s, however, black Catholics were dissatisfied with the pace of Catholic interracialism and considered it to be an organizing method that privileged the racial rehabilitation of white Catholics, but which did nothing in the way of changing their unjust reality. Chapter two of my dissertation examines the Church's application of Catholic interracial organizing in New Orleans amidst the desegregation battles of the 1950s and 1960s, during which the Church sought to integrate parochial institutions and offices. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the state moved at a snail's pace to enact the federal statute, which gave room to white supremacist groups and state officials to slow down implementation. Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel of New Orleans emerged as an early opponent of racial segregation in the Catholic Church. In a Feb. 1956 statement to Catholics, Rummel proclaimed that racial segregation was "morally wrong and sinful."³⁹ Although Rummel's words proved to be a step in the right direction for the Catholic Church, white Catholic dissent in state government, white priests in diocese, and fear of losing white members slowed his campaign. Much like the state government, the Catholic Church movement toward racial integration was slow. The Catholic Committee on

³⁹ Archbishop Joseph Rummel. "The Morality of Racial Segregation," *Pastoral Letter*, Feb. 11, 1956; 1-3, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; John Wicklein, "Catholic Archbishop Backs New Orleans Integration: Rummel Will Act Despite Protests," *The New York Times* (New York, NY) July 8, 1959.

Human Relations, an interracial Catholic organization under the direction of Archbishop Joseph Rummel and the Archdiocese of New Orleans, led the slow push for parochial school integration post-Brown. Despite the moral imperative of the Church to desegregate their institutions first, state officials integrated public schools in 1960, two years before the Catholic Church in 1962. Unsatisfied with its slow implementation, blacks sought recourse in their local papers and in letters to their bishops.

White resistance continued into the early 1960s, when Rummel finally took a forceful stand with the excommunication of three leading anti-integrationist leaders. In 1958, during the beginnings of the civil rights movement, when the United States Conference of American Bishops could no longer remain silent on the issue of racial segregation in the Catholic Church, they issued, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience," which dealt with the issues of reconciling racial segregation in the church with Christian doctrine. The bishops asserted, "Legal segregation, or any form of compulsory segregation, in itself and by its very nature imposes a stigma of inferiority upon the segregated people."⁴⁰ In 1960, the American bishops established the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ) as a national service organization representing local interracial councils. In 1963 amidst the national exposure of the civil rights movement, the National Catholic Conference on Interracial Justice formed the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago,

⁴⁰ Statement of American Bishops of the United States, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience," 1958, 2, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

Illinois. Later on that year the American bishops issued a joint statement on racial harmony in the church. Several priests and nuns also participated in the August 28th March on Washington, which marked the first public appearance of the Catholic Church in the civil rights movement.⁴¹

Chapter 3: The Associated Catholic Charities and the Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in New Orleans East

In the late 1960s, the Black Power Movement had a great impact on society at large, and the Catholic Church was not impervious to its effects. The movement's assertion of black pride and black self-determination inspired civil rights organizations such as SNCC and CORE to abandon their commitment to interracialism. Disillusioned with the church's lack of involvement in the civil rights movement, several black priests, such as Father Tom Honore, left the priesthood in the late 1960s and joined secular civic organizations, such as the Urban League of Greater New Orleans.⁴² Those who remained committed to the church began organizing black-run Catholic organizations across the US. Anthony J. Delgado founded the Council of Catholic Negro Laymen in Cleveland Ohio. In 1968, black priests established the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC) at a secret committee meeting at the Catholic Clergy Conference on the interracial apostolate. The creation of the organization came in the immediate aftermath of the assassination

⁴¹ Ronald L. Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States: A Historical Chronology," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 132-134.

⁴² Tom Honore, *Grace at Every Turn* (Bloomington: Xilbris Corporation, 2004).

of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. Patricia Grey Tyree, the only sister to attend the secret Black Clergy Caucus meeting founded the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC) that same year. From 1969-1979, black Catholic laymen and priests organized two more black Catholic organizations: the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association (NBCSA) and the National Black Lay Caucus (NBLCC). In 1970 the NBSC, NBCCC and the NBLCC came together to form the National Office for Black Catholics (NOBC). Black Catholics finally had a national organization of black Catholic priests and members of the laity committed to the betterment of their condition.⁴³ In the late 1970s, the Archdiocese of New Orleans would once again attempt to use their Catholic interracial program to mediate the resettlement of thousands of Vietnamese refugees in New Orleans East, which at the time, was a predominantly black neighborhood.

In the 1970s, the church condemned the Vietnam War and communism. Vietnamese Catholics, fleeing war and religious persecution, arrived in the US in 1975. The Vietnamese spent time in refugee camps in the northeast and mid-western parts of the country, after which the Catholic Church and a number of other religious organizations helped to settle them in locales, such as Los Angeles and New Orleans. These were predominantly Catholic Vietnamese enclaves established by Vietnamese refugees that immigrated in the 1950s during the first wave. In all, the New Orleans branch of the Catholic Charities settled roughly 3,000 Vietnamese refugees in the city

⁴³ Ronald L. Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States: A Historical Chronology," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 132-134.

from 1975-1978. The Catholic Charities, however, had no concrete plan for relocation or integration of the Vietnamese, and with no way to stem the tide of chain migration, the church participated in the displacement of blacks in employment sectors and housing in New Orleans East.⁴⁴ The ULGNO studied and reported on the economic impact Vietnamese relocation had on pre-existing black communities in New Orleans East. The 1980s ended with a national push for the incorporation of black folk culture in Catholic services and a re-articulation of Catholic interracialism.

Chapter 4: Hurricane Katrina and The Catholic Church: Toward Interracial Cooperation

Hurricane Katrina brought about a new wave of multiracial organizing facilitated by the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The Catholic Church had wavered on race for much of the twentieth century, but in the aftermath of the Katrina, the Church renewed its commitment to Catholic interracial organizing. Chapter 4 concludes this study with a discussion two moments of Catholic interracial organizing in the post-Katrina moment. Vietnamese and African Americans who lived in New Orleans East felt first-hand the devastating effects of Katrina. As they returned to begin rebuilding, the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church (MQVC) became the headquarters for the rebuilding effort. MQVC functioned as a meeting place for black community leaders and a place of worship for residents of New Orleans East whose churches were

⁴⁴ Danielle Dreilinger “40 Years After Saigon Fell, Vietnamese at Home in New Orleans,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), April 30, 2015. https://www.nola.com/news/environment/article_2f585b93-573e-59dc-8297-46d1772b6af9.html

destroyed by Katrina. Scholar and activist Eric Tang stated, “The generosity exhibited by the Vietnamese Americans towards their neighbors could be considered among the many acts of grassroots solidarity shown between and among residents after the storm.”⁴⁵ The two communities faced a major obstacle to their return when city officials proposed the opening of a landfill in their neighborhood. Under the guidance of the Church and its leaders, the black and Vietnamese communities of New Orleans East successfully prevented the local government from opening the landfill in their neighborhood.

Chapter 4 will also discuss the efforts of the Providence: Catholic Charities, Christopher Homes, St. Peter Claver/UJAMAA, St. Joseph’s/Tulane Canal CDC and Reconcile New Orleans to rehome the poorest residents of the city. The mission of this faith-based coalition was to, “address the critical need for affordable and supportive housing in southern Louisiana.”⁴⁶ Alongside smaller Catholic affiliates; Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, the Hispanic Apostolate, and the Sisters of the Holy Family, Providence established a 5-year plan to rebuild. This cadre of faith-based organizations reaffirmed the Archdiocese’s commitment to interracial action and

⁴⁵ Eric Tang, “A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (March 2011): 124 ; Jordan Flaherty, *Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six* (Chicago: Haymarket Books), 2010.

⁴⁶ “Catholic Charities USA Awards \$25 Million Grant to N.O.,” *Clarion Herald*, October 29, 2005, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.; “Preliminary Draft of a Pastoral Plan for Archdiocese,” *Clarion Herald*, December 1, 2005, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.; Ron Brocato, “Catholic Entities Band Together to Launch Housing Efforts,” *Clarion Herald*, May 6, 2006, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

collaboration post-Katrina. Lastly, Chapter 4 will closely analyze the release of Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes pastoral letter on racial harmony and interracial action in December of 2006. His pronouncement invoked the memory of his predecessor Archbishop Joseph Rummel and reaffirmed Rummel's commitment to good race relations and Catholic interracial action. In his letter, Archbishop Hughes reminded his parishioners that rebuilding the city would need to be a collective effort, one that cut across both race, class, and gender distinctions. Katrina, the storm that drowned a city, posed the perfect moment for the Catholic Church in New Orleans to grapple with its shortcomings in the way interracial organizing and to finally implement a successful Catholic interracial action plan.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Archbishop Alfred Hughes, "Made in the Image and Likeness of God: Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony," *Clarion Herald*, December 16, 2006, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

Chapter 1

The Federated Colored Catholics and the development of Catholic Social Justice

1917-1939

What began as a philosophical debate among three men over the meaning and extent of interracial co-operation in the 1930s, ended in the national decline of black Catholic led activism in the north and south until the late 1960s, and ultimately contributed to the demise of the black led Federated Colored Catholics. While the story of the development of Thomas Wyatt Turner's Federated Colored Catholics (FCC) takes place primarily in the North and Upper South, the demise of the organization, inevitably impacted the development of black Catholic organizing in the Deep South. In the period of the Federation's existence from 1925-1952, Turner faced certain regional limitations, which inhibited him from having a real impact on black Catholic conditions in the South. Despite this, he never strayed from encouraging a national black movement, which focused heavily on undoing the racial wrongs in the South. Josephite disdain for the Federation and its decidedly racial aims locked Turner out of New Orleans, a city with the largest black Catholic population. Ultimately, the Federation did not succeed in halting the growth of segregated Josephite parishes and missions in the South, an issue that was an early focus of the Federation. In fact, by the 1940s, 167 all-black missions existed across the south, in Louisiana, the District of Columbia and Maryland. Between 1928 and 1940 the number of missions increased by 93 percent as 36 new units were established in Louisiana, bringing the total number of missions in the state to 73 by the end of the

period. By 1940, 22% of the all-black Josephite missions in the U.S were located in Louisiana.⁴⁸ While this chapter focuses on the emergence of the FCC as a national organization based primarily in the North, my examination will return to New Orleans periodically in order to reveal the early struggles the FCC faced as they attempted to establish chapters in the South in the early twentieth century. Eventually, Catholic interracialism would become the main method of racial action in the South from the 1940s-1960s, but by the 1970s, black Catholics would once again call for a national black Catholic organization. New Orleans presents the best possible case study for understanding how the demise of the national Federated Colored Catholics had very real ramifications for effective black Catholic organizing at the local level.

From 1919 to 1929, the rapid expansion of Josephite all-black parishes in New Orleans and its impact on the rest of the country reignited a black Catholic movement for civil rights in the church.⁴⁹ In 1866, Cardinal Herbert Alfred Vaughan established the Josephites in England. In this period, Vaughan set about training priests to minister in the U.S. In 1871, Pius IX enacted the Negro Oath, which asked his priests to commit wholeheartedly to the care and nurturance of the black community. As a result, in 1871, the St. Josephite Society of the Sacred Heart (the Josephites) began its work of ministering to newly freed slaves in the U.S. Priests and

⁴⁸John Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States: An Investigation of Catholic Activity in Behalf of the Negroes in the United States and a Survey of the Present Condition of the Colored Missions* (Baltimore: Josephite Press, 1941), 36.

⁴⁹ John Bernard Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 93-94.

brothers underwent training at St. Joseph College of the Sacred Heart in Mill Hill in England and then traveled to the United States on their missions. Eventually, given the distance, Mill Hill church officials found it difficult to oversee the Josephites in the U.S. As result, in 1893, Cardinal Herbert Alfred Vaughn made the Josephites an independent organization. For the next 140 years, the Josephites educated, ministered to, and provided much needed social services to black communities across the U.S. The Josephites believed that in order to secure education and social services for African Americans that they needed to agree to separate parishes.⁵⁰

In response to the Josephite expansion of all-black parishes in New Orleans, Turner, the son of Maryland sharecroppers, and devout Catholic emerged as the Josephites most outspoken opponent. Turner along with his supporters questioned the church's commitment to a "universal theology" zeroing in on the Josephites as the worst perpetrators of them all. In the eyes of Turner, the proliferation of separate parishes across the U.S., a result of the Josephite model in the South, evidenced the damage their brand of social action had unleashed; for segregated worship was against canon law.⁵¹

Initially, Turner emerged as a critic of the Catholic Church's lack of support shown black Catholic soldiers during WWI. At this time in the history of the United States troops were racially segregated. The National Catholic War Council, a

⁵⁰ "Our History: The Josephites-Society of St. Joseph sacred Heart," accessed August 2, 2019. <http://www.josephites.org/about-us/our-history/>

⁵¹ John Bernard Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 95.

committee tasked with providing welfare services for Catholic soldiers, provided no services or facilities for black soldiers. Non-Catholic soldiers however, were provided services by the Y.M.C.A and the Y.W.C.A on a segregated basis. To remedy the issue, Turner arranged to meet with Col. P.H. Callahan who was at the time director of welfare services, which was funded by the all-white Knights of Columbus. The Knights were a fraternal organization whose headquarters were located in Connecticut. During the meeting, Turner was able to convince Callahan that some action needed to be taken to meet the demand for facilities among black Catholic soldiers. Callahan responded to the need by hiring black Catholic workers and placing them in cantonments at several camps where they remained until the end of the war. Although Turner began his public struggle for black Catholic civil rights as a response to the lack of services for black soldiers during the war, he would speak out on many more occasions about segregated parishes, discrimination in Catholic education and in churches across the U.S.⁵²

Thomas Wyatt Turner understood the importance of a national black Catholic led organization in the struggle for black civil rights. The FCC presented a chance for the Catholic Church to support black self-determination in what would become the long struggle for civil rights in the United States. As this chapter shows, the organization argued for greater black clerical and lay representation in the church, better schools and opportunities for their children and a rapid end to segregation in all

⁵²Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 31-32.

facets of the Church. While Turner and his FCC were willing to work with an interracial cadre of Catholic leaders, they also understood that any Catholic program focused on improving the condition of blacks in the Church needed to be led by black Catholics. Turner lauded the efforts of white liberal Catholic leaders like John LaFarge and William Markoe to advocate for equal rights through their interracial organization, but he believed that only when the Church allowed black Catholics to be the voice of their own movement would the Church truly achieve racial justice. The demise of the Federated Colored Catholics came as a result of competing programs for racial justice. Ultimately, as the chapter concludes, three competing visions for racial justice in the Catholic Church resulted in the repression and silencing of Turner's FCC, an organization that could have paved the way for integration in the Church and its facilities earlier on in the movement. The end of the FCC inevitably left black Catholics without a national voice in the larger struggle for civil rights in the 1950s and 60s, and prevented them from presenting a united front in the struggle for racial justice in the Church well into the 1970s.

Thomas Wyatt Turner's Early Life

Thomas Wyatt Turner was born in 1877 and grew up in the border state of Maryland, where Jesuits and Sulpicians priests oversaw the care of black Catholics.⁵³ Turner's parents, Eli and Linnie Gross Turner were children of black Catholic slaves

⁵³ John T. Gillard, S.S. J., *The Catholic Church and the American Negro: Being an Investigation of the Past and Present Activities of the Catholic Church in Behalf of the 12, 000,000 Negroes in the United States, with an Examination of the Difficulties which affect the work of the Colored Missions* (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society Press, 1929), 15.

from Southern Maryland. As a child, Turner, worked alongside his parents in the tobacco and cornfields of southern Maryland. His parents were devout Catholics who raised Turner in the Catholic Church, which in Maryland was already racially divided, unlike New Orleans. Turner witnessed firsthand the discrimination blacks endured at the hands of whites in the world around him, this discrimination became particularly evident when discussions about black education arose. He said that as a child he had to fight against the white notion that, “elementary education was enough for colored people.”⁵⁴ In 1894, Turner graduated from St. Mary’s Parochial and Industrial School, an all-black Episcopalian School in Maryland. When Turner graduated in 1894 he was offered a scholarship to attend an Episcopalian school, Lincoln University. He turned down the offer however, because the recipient of the award had to be an Episcopalian. Thus, with his commitment to the Catholic Church intact, he instead chose to leave Maryland for Washington, D.C. where he attended Howard University. Despite the abuses of the Catholic Church, Turner remained committed to the Catholic Universalist ideal, which endorsed the equality of all men in the eyes of God.⁵⁵ In 1901 he briefly enrolled at the Catholic University of America and from 1901 to 1902 he taught at the Tuskegee institute under Booker T. Washington.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Roger Lowenstein, “Crusading Professor, Now 100 Returns to Hampton Institute,” *Times-Herald (Newport News, VA)*, January 30, 1978, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵ “The Man Who Stayed Baptized,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, April 10, 1977, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 21-23.

While at the institute he gained valuable experience teaching and in 1902 he moved back to Maryland and became one of the first black teachers at an all-black Baltimore High and Training School. For the next ten years, he continued to teach at the Baltimore High and Training School while he completed his AM degree at Howard University. In 1909, Turner's introduction to civil rights organizing came by way of the NAACP. In fact, he joined the very first chapter of the Baltimore NAACP and worked as the organization's secretary for several years.⁵⁷ Four years later, in 1913, Turner moved to Washington D.C. and while there, he obtained his doctorate from Cornell University. He recalled the racial climate of Washington in this period stating, "the environment was not a pleasant one for black people in that city," due to the Wilson administration's introduction of new policies of segregation among its federal agencies.⁵⁸ In the midst of this, Turner joined the faculty at Howard University and organized the first citywide NAACP membership drive.

By 1917, Turner branched out from his teaching duties at Howard and participation in the NAACP to create a black Catholic lay organization committed to the struggle for black equality in the church. In Washington D.C that year, Dr. Turner

⁵⁷ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, "Journey of a Black Catholic," *America*, July 10, 1976, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Former City Teacher Who Won Doctorate," *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 12, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Noted Colored Educator A Native of Hughesville," *Times Crescent*, August 24, 1945, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Makes Study of Teaching," *Daily Press*, December 24, 1942, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁸ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, "Journey of a Black Catholic," *America*, July 10, 1976. *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives.

invited several of his highly educated black Catholic friends to his basement to discuss how best to improve the condition of blacks in the Catholic Church. Initially, the loosely organized Catholic layman's group called itself the Committee Against the Extension of Race Prejudice in the Church. Initially, the group met bi-monthly to discuss how best to support African American soldiers in the war effort, but by the end of the war in 1918, the committee refocused its energies on confronting the spread of racial violence across the U.S, and on dealing racial discrimination in the church.

From 1882-1968, 3,446 African Americans were lynched in the U.S.⁵⁹ By the 1920s an interracial anti-lynching movement emerged headed by white women of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL), and black women of the Women's Committee of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), the African American wing of the ASWPL. The NAACP Anti-lynching Crusaders also joined the battle against lynching. As with the debate over organizing methods that would take place in the 1930s among Thomas Wyatt Turner, William Markoe and John LaFarge of the Federated Colored Catholics, women anti-lynching organizers in the 1920s and 1930s struggled over the focus and organization of their movement. The white women of the ASWPL preferred to focus their energies on the reeducation of white communities by issuing press releases and editorials in local newspapers about, "the South's shameful records of mob lynchings," while the CIC

⁵⁹ "History of Lynchings," NAACP, accessed August 5, 2019, <https://www.naacp.org/history-of-lynchings/>

and the Crusaders focused on the passage of anti-lynching legislation, mainly the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill (1922) and the Costigan-Wagner Bill (1935).⁶⁰ Interracial organizing was a difficult task for all organizations committed to racial equality in the North, but especially in the South where ingrained racial behaviors dictated organizing across the color line. When Turner's Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics wasn't focused on calling for an end to race violence, they turned to enacting racial change in the Catholic Church.

Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics: Precursor to the FCC

Early on, the infant organization spearheaded a letter-writing campaign addressed to the American Catholic hierarchy outlining their concerns as they pertained to Catholic racial injustice in the Church as a whole. The group lobbied for the admittance of black clergy to the apostolate and the creation of Catholic facilities of higher education for black Catholics.⁶¹ In 1919, the American Catholic hierarchy met with committee members at the Catholic University of America upon the request of Turner's group. At this meeting, the group submitted a brief piece on the plight of black Catholics in the U.S.⁶² In this initial statement, the group argued against segregation in all Catholic educational institutions and protested the lack of colored

⁶⁰ Jordynn Jack and Lucy Masagee, "Ladies and Lynching: Southern Women, Civil Rights, and the Rhetoric of Interracial Cooperation," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2011) 497.

⁶¹ Mary A. Ward, *A Mission for Justice: The History of the First African American Catholic Church in Newark, New Jersey* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 24-25.

⁶² Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Archbishop Michael J. Curley, December 30, 1922, 1, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

laymen on all boards tasked with church planning. Their statement also requested the removal of the Josephites and the suppression of their model of separate parishes in Washington, D.C and elsewhere in the country.⁶³

In the summer of 1919, the Josephites continued their creation of separate black parishes in New Orleans: Holy Redeemer in the Marigny and All Saints in Algiers opened that year.⁶⁴ The Josephite Negro and Indian missions of the period created what Turner referred to as a “parish within a parish.” Turner warned the hierarchy that the Josephite turn to missions instead of supporting the development of black Catholic leadership set “a color test above the consideration of catholicity.” He suggested that the actions of the hierarchy may be “bringing about a solidarity of our group upon a basis of color alone, and not Catholicity.”⁶⁵

By 1919 membership in the fledgling committee increased to twenty-five participants and the group changed its name to the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics.⁶⁶ The group divided itself into sub-committees in order to cover

⁶³ Statement by Federated Colored Catholics to American Roman Catholic Hierarchy, 1919, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics to Archbishop Michael J. Curley, December 30, 1922, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁴ The following individuals served as archbishops of New Orleans in the period of the separation of church; Francis Xavier Leray, Francis Janssens (1888-1897) and Placide-Louis Chapelle (1897-1905), and James Hubert Blenk (1906-1917).

⁶⁵ Letter, Federated Colored Catholics to the Roman Catholic Church in the United States of America, undated, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁶ “Rules and Regulations of the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics,” Washington, D.C. Leatherwood Print, 1919, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

more issues pertaining to black Catholics in the church; some were tasked with meeting with Catholic hierarchy.⁶⁷ The committee continued to protest, in writing, the creation of separate parishes by the Josephites but despite this, the social order had by the 1920s effectively created “residential religious segregation,” in cities like Baltimore, Washington D.C. and New Orleans. This phenomenon was glaring in the case of the archdiocese of New Orleans because this was where a majority of Josephite parishes were located. Their model actively pushed black Catholics to undesirable and dangerous areas of the city and placed once interracial parishes/churches completely in the hands of white Catholics.⁶⁸ In 1920, C. Marcellus Dorsey, editor of the Baltimore *Afro-American*, and opponent of the Josephites wrote a searing article on the Josephite missions. Dorsey stated, “It is useless to attempt to hide the fact that colored Catholics are disgusted with many of the white priests who are living by means of the Colored Catholic missions.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “Some Background in Formation of the Federated Colored Catholics,” undated, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “Dr. Thomas W. Turner Will Celebrate 75th Year,” *The Catholic Standard*, March 14, 1952, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “The Federated Colored Catholics of the United States,” *The Catholic Standard*, March 14, 1952, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “Rules and Regulations of the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics,” 1919, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁸ John Bernard Alberts, “Origins of Black Catholic Parishes in Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1718-1920,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1998), 312-371; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore, December 30, 1922, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁹ “C.M. Dorsey Tells of Effort Made to Expel Him from Catholic Order,” *The Afro-American*, July 30, 1920, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard

In the early 1920s, Turner supported the opening of an all-black secondary school in Southern Maryland. Having graduated with a Ph.D. in Biology from Hampton University, Turner focused his efforts on assuring a similar education for future black students by supporting the building of a secondary school for black children in southern Maryland. The school's financial backing came from donors like the Knights of Columbus, which donated \$38,000, and Archbishop of Baltimore James Cardinal Gibbons, who donated thousands of dollars to purchase land before he died in 1921. Early the next year, Gibbons' successor, Archbishop Michael J. Curley approved the plans for the institute.

Turner and his Committee were instrumental in the initial planning of the Institute donating generously to the school's financial base in the early 1920s. He worked closely with white Jesuit priest John LaFarge in the founding of the Institute in 1924. During Turner's teen years, the two had developed a close relationship while LaFarge performed his missionary work among black Catholics in St. Mary's County, Maryland, from 1911-1926.⁷⁰ Father John LaFarge was born in 1880 in Newport Rhode Island. His father was a prominent painter of the period. As an adult, LaFarge chose to join the Jesuit social order, an order which at the time, was the largest and most powerful of the religious social orders of the period. During his tenure as a missionary in Maryland, LaFarge traveled the countryside and witnessed early on the

University Archives, Washington D.C. Cardinal Gibbons Institute was opened in September 1924 and dedicated in October 1924. Victor and Constance Daniels were hired as the Institute's first principal and assistant principal.

⁷⁰ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics* (New York: Garland, 1988), 6-7.

poor conditions in which black Catholics lived in the south.⁷¹ However, he remained complacent concerning racial discrimination. There is no evidence to support LaFarge's engagement in the Washington and DuBois debate of the period nor is there any record of his having met with or spoken about the NAACP.⁷²

An integrated approach to seminary education by the Josephites and the resultant clerical resistance to black priests in white seminaries forced the closure of two Josephite seminaries to black students. Given the violent social milieu of the period, Louis B. Pastorelli, head of the Josephites, closed Epiphany Apostolic College and St. Joseph's Seminary, schools that were once open to integrated education.⁷³ Now the school only admitted the occasional racially mixed student, a tactic to protect the Josephites from any accusations of discrimination.⁷⁴ The way in which this Catholic social order ostracized black Catholics intensified the response of the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics. In his 1922 letter to Archbishop Michael Curley of Baltimore, Turner insisted, "the Josephite Order be withdrawn from activities among Colored people in the city, and that Secular Clergy or some other whom YOUR GRACE may decide upon be put in their place."⁷⁵ He

⁷¹ David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 1-16.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1-16, 33.

⁷³ Stephen Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1969*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1990), 5-6.

⁷⁴ Letter, "Committee of Fifteen to the Hierarchy," 1919, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁵ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Rev. Michael J. Curley, December 30, 1922, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

spoke candidly about the misguided Josephite vision of black Catholic improvement by way of the ‘Negro’ missions, and their reluctance to accept the need for a black Catholic priesthood and lay leaders to guide the struggle against racial discrimination in the Catholic Church. He protested the exclusion of black children from Josephite secondary schools and seminaries. Turner concluded his flogging of the Josephites with, “we cannot have advancement of the Negro in the Church with the Josephite methods of dealing with our problems.”⁷⁶ Turner did, however, experience some gains in his struggle for adequate black education when the Cardinal Gibbons Institute finally opened its doors in September 1924, and was dedicated in October of the same year. The school served as both a vocational and secondary school for black Catholics and also provided an agricultural component to their curriculum.⁷⁷ Eventually, LaFarge moved his racial apostolate from Maryland to New York City in 1926. He remained connected to Turner, however, by way of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, and in 1925 LaFarge became active in the Committee in order to promote its continued financial support of the school. He used these early connections to the Institute to jockey for a prominent position in what would soon become the Federated Colored Catholics.⁷⁸

Thomas Wyatt Turner, Black Self-Determination and the Birth of the Federated Colored Catholics

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁷ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933* (New York; Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 41.

⁷⁸David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 39.

In 1925, the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics chose to adopt a formal constitution and changed its name to the Federated Colored Catholics (FCC) of the United States. The FCC's leadership consisted of nine prominent black and white Catholics; Turner stood at the helm of the organization as its President, white priest Michael J. Curley served as the group's spiritual leader, William A. Prater held the Executive Secretary position. Four Vice Presidents, a treasurer and recording secretary fell under Turner, Curley and Prater. The Federation consisted of member organizations called chapters; each chapter was represented by a delegate and each delegate expected to attend the annual conference held by the FCC.⁷⁹

The Federated Colored Catholics held several annual conventions from 1925-1932.⁸⁰ The FCC dedicated itself to creating a unified black Catholic movement by

⁷⁹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Rev. Michael J. Curley, December 9, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Colored Catholics Organize Society," *Washington Post*, December 29, 1924, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Federated Colored Catholics to the Roman Catholic Church in the United States of America, undated, 4, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Constitution of the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, December 1925, 1-6, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Turner asked Curley to serve as the organization's Spiritual adviser because at the time the District of Columbia fell under the command of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The title of Spiritual adviser for all intents and purposes was merely a title but most importantly signified hierarchical approval.

⁸⁰ Program for the First Annual Convention of the Federated of Colored Catholics, December 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Rev. Stephen L. Theobald, December 9, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Michael J. Curley (Spiritual Director), December 9, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; These letters are thank

incorporating black Catholic organizations and missionary orders from across the U.S. under the arm of the FCC. In a 1925 letter addressed to black Catholics all over the U.S, the FCC made known their goals. “Every Catholic Negro organization should be affiliated with the Federation. Delegates should be present from every organization in every Catholic Church where there is a colored group.” These organizations would be invited to the FCC’s annual convention to report their findings on Catholic race relations in their respective areas. Federation leaders hoped that through conferencing annually they could gain, “a clearer understanding of their common problems and to work out the most effective cooperation leading to their solution.”⁸¹

Governance of the organization rested in the hands of an elected Board of Directors, which consisted of fifteen members. The first edition of the FCC’s constitution stated that only black Catholics were “eligible for election to membership on the Diocesan Board of Directors,” but Turner and his colleagues amended the statement before the final release of the Constitution.⁸² This early opening up of the FCC to white Catholics showed Turner’s willingness to engage in a certain degree of interracial co-operation. His initial hesitation to allow white Catholics to hold positions among the Board of Directors revealed his conviction that sympathetic

you letters sent by Thomas Wyatt Turner to high ranking members of the FCC and prominent black Catholics after the organization’s first annual convention.

⁸¹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Fellow Catholics, September 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸² “Constitution of a Diocesan Branch of the Federated Colored Catholics,” December 1925, 1-8, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

white Catholic organizations and clergy should only play a supporting role in the organization. The FCC sought to reveal what they referred to as the, “true plight and the urgent needs of the Catholic Negro throughout the country.”⁸³ The group claimed that it did not intend to supplant other Catholic organizations dedicated to the uplift of black Catholics but instead the FCC reassured the Catholic hierarchy that, “its sole purpose,” was to, “weld all others into a solid unit for racial betterment.”⁸⁴

In 1925, LaFarge attended the Federation’s first convention held December 6-7 in Washington, D.C, and following it, he wrote an article for *America* on the events of the conference.⁸⁵ *America* was a national Jesuit produced magazine that emerged in 1909. Founded in New York, the magazine contained information on the relationship between Catholicism and American life. Earlier that year, Fr. Wilfrid Parsons, editor of *America*, asked LaFarge to join the staff where he quickly began to write a number of articles on blacks in the north. In these articles, he drew connections between black struggles in the South and the hardships blacks faced in the North. He argued that the great migration made the problem of the color-line as important in the North as it was in the South.⁸⁶ Early in the Federation’s history,

⁸³ Thomas Wyatt Turner, “Purposes and Aims in the Organization of the Federated Colored Catholics,” 1927, 27, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Thomas Wyatt Turner, “Some Background in the Formation of Federated Colored Catholics,” undated, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁵ Program for Sunday, “Federation of Colored Catholics Convention,” December 6 and 7, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁶ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Fellow Catholic, October 15, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.;

LaFarge and Turner shared a vision concerning the mission of the organization. In their eyes the organization represented the expression of black self-determination assisted by white liberal sympathizers. For both Turner and LaFarge, education and social reform were necessary tools to correct racial wrongs and uplift blacks in society. This is evidenced in their early support of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute. This shared vision, however, would change over the next several years.⁸⁷

At the organization's second annual convention in 1926, held in Washington D.C., members of the NAACP, St. Josephs' Society for Colored Missions (Josephite Fathers); the Society of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament of Indians and Colored People; and a large number of other local bodies, affiliated with and under the parent Church attended.⁸⁸ By this time the group had grown significantly in size and boasted a following of one third of the black parishes nationwide.⁸⁹ At the federation's 1926 convention, LaFarge suggested a, "greater diffusion of news concerning the activities of the Federation among all the interested communities."⁹⁰

Letter, Philip Steffes O'Malley to Thomas Wyatt Turner, Nov. 20, 1925, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁷ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933* (New York; Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 302-303.

⁸⁸ Afro-American, "Catholics From 35 States Meet in D.C: Denomination Has 175 Priests and 700 Sisters," *Afro-American*, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Minutes of the First Session of the Federated Colored Catholics," December 5, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Fellow Catholics, December 5, 6 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the First Session of the Federated Colored Catholics, December 5, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Negro Catholics Give Thanks for Colored Clergy: Express Loyalty to Holy Father," *N.C.W.C News Service*, December 24, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt*

LaFarge believed *America* would be a great way to share information on the Federation's conventions as well as any particular problems black Catholics faced across the U.S. In a 1926 letter to Turner on the topic of how to better disseminate materials on black Catholic struggles, LaFarge asserted, "some of the matters you have spoken of may be brought up in the near future in *America*." He continued, "the more data, facts and figures etc. you can furnish me at once with regard to the position of the Catholic Negro, the more solidly I can work on this matter."⁹¹ The Federation also received a space in the Catholic periodical, the *Council Review* and Victor Daniels, head of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, became the column's editor.⁹²

The third annual convention, held in New York the following year, marked a turning point in Turner and LaFarge's shared vision for the organization. A number of Catholic social orders and organizations from the South attended the federation's N.Y. convention. Because the theme of the convention was "Catholic Negro Education," those invited to attend were organizations and individuals providing black Catholic education or those simply dedicated to improving it. Superior of the Josephites, Rev. L.B Pastorelli, Victor Daniels, one of two headmasters over the Cardinal Gibbons Institute and several other representatives from mission states like

Turner Collection, 1877-1978, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Translated from L'O'sservatore Romano, "Negro Catholics Hold Congress," December 30, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹¹ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, October 3, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹² "Negro Catholics Hold Congress," December 30, 1926, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

Mississippi, Maryland and Missouri were in attendance.⁹³ Prior to the convention in September, LaFarge sent a letter to Turner concerning the Federation's program. In the letter, LaFarge warned Turner that he believed the group's mission, as it stood, would not, "insure further progress."⁹⁴ LaFarge's change occurred as a result of a study of a number of Catholic organizations, their objectives and causes of success. While the group's current constitution stressed a focus on black self-determination with whites playing a supportive role, LaFarge, at this time, began to believe that only interracial action and cooperation would insure the organization's continued ecclesiastical approval. In this way, LaFarge advised Turner that the organization needed a mission that would be recognized by critics as favorable. Turner listened to LaFarge's suggestion concerning adding an interracial component to the organization's activities, but he still remained firmly committed to the organization's original mission, as stated in the 1925 Constitution, of encouraging black Catholic unity and securing educational opportunities for black Catholics. Turner did, however, find LaFarge's suggestion helpful in preventing possible hierarchical critiques of the organization's purely black focus, so he complied by forming an interracial relations committee at the convention that year. LaFarge suggested that the federation work closely with the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC). The NCWC was founded in 1919 and consisted of clergy and bishops who issued

⁹³ Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, "Meeting of Workers Among Colored Catholics," September 4th and 5th, 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁴ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, July 27, 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

pronouncements on issues like education and healthcare. LaFarge believed that this collaboration would be of particular importance because the Federation's connection to the NCWC would offer exposure and would ensure continued hierarchical support.⁹⁵

At the convention, the FCC resolved to establish an interracial race relations committee under the auspices of the Federation. Meant to exist as a smaller group within the federation, the group's leadership consisted of white and black representatives pooled from the leading religious and lay societies of the Church.⁹⁶

The federation resolved that,

A committee on race relations be appointed, and that this committee be empowered to invite representatives from white Catholic organizations to join with them in formulating a program for bringing about a better understanding and cooperation between the races in the Church.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Letter, Unknown to Thomas Wyatt Turner, August 23, 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁶ Letter, Jo Smith to Josephites, September 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Minutes of the Third Annual Convention: The Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, September 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Thomas Wyatt Turner, "The Federation of Workers Among Catholic Negroes," September 4, 5th 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; National Catholic Welfare Conference, "Negro Catholics Urge Council on Race Relations," September 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁷ Resolutions Adopted by the Federated Colored Catholics in Third Annual Convention Assembled in the City of New York, September 4 and 5, 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Colored Catholics Urge Council on Race Relations," *The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia*, October 1927, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

The federation tasked the group with the propagation of the Catholic faith, assisting in the push for a native clergy, and the committee devoted the remainder of its energies to creating a program, to reeducate white people on black culture.⁹⁸ The establishment of this committee revealed Turner's willingness to co-operate with whites in the interest of black equality in the church, but conversely highlights his understanding of the interracial committee as a nominal part of the larger mission of the federation. Turner wanted the FCC to remain a black-led and black run organization, with black lay leaders at its helm. He did not want the federation's openness to white co-operation to transform the protest organization into one led by white clergy and laymen.

Turner envisioned the struggle for black Catholic civil rights as a bottom up struggle while LaFarge believed it was a top down campaign. Turner's support of interracial co-operation hinged on the development of a black Catholic leadership because he believed that only the privileging of black Catholic leadership could influence and better race relations or what he called the "inter-racial condition." LaFarge, on the other hand, believed that white clergy and laymen needed to be at the forefront of correcting racial inequality in the church and asserted that only through extensive black-white interaction, and educating white Catholics on the Catholic Universalist ideal, could change occur. He sought to emphasize interracial co-operation as the main mission of the federation, this co-operation came by way of an

⁹⁸ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 14.

increase in inter-racial committees, charitable contributions to Negro missions, and white Catholic reeducation on the moral wrongs of racial discrimination within the Church.⁹⁹

The presence of southern Catholic clergy at the 1927 convention affirmed the growing national influence of the federation. Mrs. Eloise Bibb Thompson, a native New Orleanian gave the convention's opening address, in it, she confirmed her support of the organization's principals and methods stating,

I confess, I marveled when the move to organize was agitated; for, I remembered as a child the attitude of Colored Catholics way down below the Mason and Dixon Line in Louisiana. We will follow the Lamb whither soever he goeth, they said and made no effort to give their children a Catholic education nor to assist the church for the preparation of a native priesthood nor for any other progressive move for which this Body is striving.¹⁰⁰

Mrs. Thompson spoke of an evolving black Catholic consciousness, a consciousness unwilling to simply sit back and wait for gradual racial change as proposed by church hierarchy. She concluded, "your coming here today brings home the fact that a new type of Colored Catholic has evolved during the decades of this new century."¹⁰¹

The following year, the FCC held its fourth annual convention in Cincinnati, Ohio with an attendance of 300,000 white and black Catholics. In Turner's announcement of the 1928 convention, he was elated that the introduction of an inter-racial committee had increased support of the organization. He stated in an

⁹⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes of the Third Annual Convention: The Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, September 1927, 12, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 12.

announcement of the upcoming meeting that “the organization is having the heartiest cooperation and endorsement of the Highest Authorities of the Church, and it is our hope, with your help, to make it a credit to the Church and to the race.”¹⁰² This meeting marked the first appearance of a new joint program funded by the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems and the new wing of the FCC, the Committee of Inter-racial relations. This would be the first real conversation between black and white attendees where participants could speak on a broader range of topics such as the lack of black businesses, high unemployment rates among African Americans, and black access to unions.

Cincinnati papers painted the meeting in the press as the convention where, “remedies were sought rather than arguments.”¹⁰³ While the groups discussed a number of black issues, including black discrimination in Catholic hospitals, the lack

¹⁰² Thomas Wyatt Turner Announcement, Fourth Annual Convention of the Federated Colored Catholics, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, September 27, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰³ Program Fourth Annual Convention, Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, September 2,3 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Resolutions Adopted in the Fourth Annual Convention Assembled in the City of Cincinnati, September 2-3, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “Problems of Negro Considered At Catholic Conference on Industrial Relations-Religious Body to Assemble Today,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 21, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “Racial Warfare is Discussed,” *Cincinnati Post*, September 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “Negro Conference is Fact Finding,” *Cincinnati Times Star*, September 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

of industrial and vocational training, William Prater, a member of the FCC's press committee, remained focused on discrimination in brick and mortar schools as well as the Josephite proclivity toward all-black parishes. Prater stated, "I urge the discontinuation of segregation in Church and School. I do hereby urge the committee on resolutions to take the matter up at once and prayerfully beg the Church Officials to heed our appeal because they are sewing [sic] the seeds of discontent in every section of the land."¹⁰⁴ Despite the introduction of an inter-racial committee in 1928, in Turner's eyes, the object of the FCC remained the same as it had been in its inception, "to bring a closer union and better feeling among all Catholic Negroes; to advance the cause of Catholic education throughout the Negro population."¹⁰⁵

Turner's shift in perspective was roughly coterminous with that of W.E.B. DuBois, whose tenure with the NAACP began in 1909 when he sought to create a bi-racial organization that would deal with the issues facing African Americans in the U.S. Initially, W.E.B. DuBois's approach to black racial uplift focused on the reeducation of whites, but as his time with the NAACP, a white-dominated

¹⁰⁴ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 57.

¹⁰⁵ "Colored Catholics Hold Meeting in Cin *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978, Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.*; "Federation to Discuss Problems in Meeting at Holy Trinity Church-300,000 Catholics Represented," *Cincinnati Inquirer*, August 31, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.*; "Federated Colored Catholics Coming: Holy Trinity Church to be the Scene of an Illustrious Gathering," *Cincinnati Bulletin*, August 30, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.*.

organization, intensified, his vision for a bi-racial movement began to change. His post-1928 strategy now called for a, “scientific investigation and organized action among Negroes, in close cooperation, to secure the survival of the Negro race, until the cultural development of America and the world is willing to recognize Negro freedom.” Although DuBois had reaffirmed his commitment to black self-determination prior to his 1928 shift, his time spent with the predominantly white NAACP and their struggle over the direction of *The Crisis* only functioned to cement his propensity toward black autonomy and self-organization. DuBois’s shift from a commitment to interracial organizing to one that promoted black self-determination did not go unnoticed by Thomas Wyatt Turner. Turner’s early participation in the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP necessarily exposed him to DuBois shifting racial program. Turner would later confide in DuBois as Fathers John LaFarge and William Markoe sought to transform his black-led FCC into an interracial organization controlled by white liberal clergy members.¹⁰⁶

John LaFarge and William Markoe on Catholic Interracialism

Moreover, in this year, LaFarge’s perspective on interracial cooperation began to change as a consequence of his establishment of, and participation in, the Catholic Laymen’s Union, which amounted to twenty-five black professionals. His time with the Union convinced LaFarge that an interracial approach was the best way to confront the race problem. LaFarge’s studies of the black struggle up until this point

¹⁰⁶ Adolph L. Reed, Jr., “W.E.B. DuBois: A Perspective on the Bases of His Political Thought” *Political Theory* 13, no. 3 (August 1985): 435

led him to the conclusion that racism was, “a matter of relationship.” He stressed a meeting of the best white and black minds to figure out the best solutions to the ‘The Problem of the Negro,’ and only after this meeting would their solutions be gradually disseminated to the masses.”¹⁰⁷ According to LaFarge, at these meetings blacks would teach whites the Catholic principles of race relations through an examination of their experiences with racism. In a sense the oppressed would become the teachers of their own subjugators, those very individuals at the center of their ill treatment. These newly enlightened white Catholics would then put these Catholic principles of good race relations into practice in the public realm. The Jesuit priest felt optimistic about racial cooperation because he believed most whites were simply ignorant of the impact discrimination had on blacks.

The same year, editors of the *Council Review* handed the task of distributing material on the FCC’s dealings to C. Marcellus Dorsey of Baltimore. He began his coverage of the convention by publishing the proceedings of the convention. In the issue, the federation’s 1928 constitution was reasserted. Of particular interest in the constitution was a focus on the problems of all blacks Catholics across the U.S. regardless of region. The constitution reiterated that while local conditions would not be ignored, the federation was, “especially concerned with setting forth the true plight and the urgent needs of the Catholic Negro throughout the country in order that each

¹⁰⁷ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 302-303.

community may have an intelligent ideal toward which to work.”¹⁰⁸ Turner left the convention feeling that based on broader exposure and ecclesiastical support that his organization had a, “very good meeting.”¹⁰⁹ The next convention tested the limits of this hope for regional connections among black Catholics with the introduction of Jesuit William Markoe and his newsletter, *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*.

Father William Markoe was a Jesuit priest who at the time was stationed in St. Louis, Missouri, working among black Catholics. Born in 1892 to parents who were descendants of French Huguenots, his family settled in St. Paul Minnesota in the late nineteenth century. In his early years, Markoe disliked school, despite this he continued his education at St Thomas College for two years. Then, in 1912, he moved on to St. Louis University, a Jesuit institution. Impacted by his time at St. Louis, Markoe entered the Jesuit’s novitiate at Florissant, Missouri. A fact of particular note was that Belgian Jesuits built the seminary in 1823, after traveling from Baltimore with their three slaves. These slaves tended the farms supplying food for the priests. One hundred years later Markoe was assigned to that same area in the care of black Catholics. Inevitably he cared for some of the descendants of those earlier Jesuit slaves. While on assignment his interactions with black Catholics throughout the countryside would help to foment his dedication to improving the black condition. In

¹⁰⁸ Official Record of the Proceeding of the Fourth National Convention of the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, Cincinnati Ohio, September 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William A. Prater, September 27, 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

1915, Markoe became an ordained Jesuit priest and three years later he began studying philosophy at Mt. St. Michael's Scholasticate located in Spokane, Washington.¹¹⁰

In 1920, Loyola University Press published Markoe's first book, a biography of St. Peter Claver entitled "The Slave of the Negro."¹¹¹ In this work you get an early glimpse of Markoe's position on how best to address discrimination against blacks in the church. He states, "if we hope to lead the Negro into the Catholic Church we would first have to convert the millions of scandal-giving white Catholics." He continued to write about the problems of the blacks in *America*, the same magazine in which John LaFarge published. In his early articles for the magazine, Markoe asserted that his goal was not to gain social equality for blacks, but instead, he wanted to focus on the prejudicial beliefs held by those in charge of their spiritual care.¹¹²

I do not ask the recognition of the Negro in the social or profane world; but in religion he should not be denied his God-given heritage. Make the black man a child of God, a co-heir with Christ; having made him this, accept him as such, and the other tangled threads of this complicated problem with unravel themselves. Refuse him these rights and you reject the only real solution of a daily more perplexing racial conundrum.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 136-139.

¹¹¹ William M. Markoe, *The Slave of the Negroes*, (Loyola University Press: Chicago, Ill, 1920).

¹¹² William M. Markoe, "Viewing the Negro Supernaturally," *America*, June 20, 1920, 200-201, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "The New Race Problem," *America*, October 9, 1920, 582-84, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹¹³ William M. Markoe, "Solution to the Race Problem," *America*, November 27, 1920, 125-126, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

He persisted in his articles throughout the early 1920s that more needed to be done on behalf of black Catholics.

Early on he appeared even more interested in race relations than LaFarge. By the time LaFarge had published his first article in *America*, Markoe had already written five articles on the subject.¹¹⁴ Markoe, much like LaFarge believed that blacks in other areas of the country, outside of the south, were also in need of support. Markoe begins his article, “the South retains her share of the difficulty, but the problem daily looms more formidable in all other parts of the country.”¹¹⁵ He continues, “during the past fifteen years hundreds of thousands of Negroes have left the land of the cotton blossoms and set their faces resolutely towards the North.”¹¹⁶ That year, he republished his 1920 article in *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle* entitled “The New Race Problem.” In his piece, Markoe argued that white church officials had done a poor job of getting white Catholics to look upon the souls of black folk without the haze of misguided stereotypes about depravity and criminality.

¹¹⁴ David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State university Press, 1996), 113; William M. Markoe, “The Negro’s Viewpoint,” *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, April 1928, 6, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; “Race and Religious Prejudice,” *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, May 1928, 3, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁵ William M. Markoe, “The New Race Problem,” *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, September 1928, 4, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

Despite Dorsey's release of the proceedings of the 1928 Cincinnati convention, Markoe remained largely unaware of the federations' existence. When, in 1929 he began to hear whispers of the federation's next convention, he decided to attend the meeting held in Baltimore, where he visited the headquarters of the Josephite Fathers. Markoe was an ardent supporter of the Jesuit and Josephite colored missions despite Turner's disdain for them. In his October issue of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, Markoe proclaimed, "no power or influence nor any organization in the United States is at present accomplishing so much real, solid and lasting good for the Negro as the Catholic Church through her missions."¹¹⁷ He continued, "her methods may be quiet, unobtrusive, even slow, but they are the same which have given the only true civilization to the world."¹¹⁸ Upon meeting the Josephites and discussing the upcoming convention he planned to attend, he became convinced that the Fathers were critical of Turner's organization. Markoe also got the impression that the Josephites believed that the federation aimed to eradicate all Josephite segregated parishes, which at the time amounted to most of the Josephite holdings in the South.¹¹⁹

Once the convention got under way, Markoe noticed something different about how the organization functioned. He, unlike the Josephites, did not view the organization as progressive, but as a conservative Jim Crow organization that

¹¹⁷ William M. Markoe, "Catholic Mission to the Negro, October 1928, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁹ William M. Markoe, "An Interracial Role, *Memoirs of William Markoe, 1900-1906*," 130, (Typescript 1967) Jesuit Missouri Province Archives, St. Louis.

privileged black leadership over an interracial administration. Despite his reservations, Markoe chose to join the federation that year but did not reveal his critiques of it. He offered his magazine, *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, as the organizations' official organ.¹²⁰ Turner hoped that, *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, a Saint-Louis based Catholic journal, would allow a better dissemination of the organization's activities. He also believed wholeheartedly that *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* could, "assist in bringing the more or less loosely organized units of the federation closely together so as to form an enduring closely-knit body of sterling Catholic men and women."¹²¹ *The St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* for some time in 1929 and in the early thirties lived up to the Turner's aspirations. The journal reported on the plight of black Catholics across the U.S., the Josephite run Negro and Indian missions of Maryland and Louisiana as well the condition of the black Catholics subjected to them. Turner continued to espouse the belief that the Catholic missions were only a band-aid solution, a smokescreen for deeper problems of the period, namely, black access to Catholic education and the perpetuation of racial inequality in

¹²⁰ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 174-175; William A. Prater, "F.C.C. to Convene in Baltimore," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, September 1929, 3, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Resolution Adopted by the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, September 2, 1929, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; John LaFarge, "The Baltimore Conference," October 1929, 5, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹²¹ William M. Markoe, "The New Race Problem," *Chronicle*, September 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

the Catholic Church. If we look at New Orleans as a case study in this respect, we find that approximately 2,000 black children were enrolled in the Negro missions under the Holy Ghost Fathers and Josephites.¹²²

Not only did Markoe extend the use of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* to the federation, he also devoted space in his magazine to several priests and social orders dedicated to the care of black Catholics and black Catholic missions. They too used the space as a tool to promote the success of their missionary work among blacks in the South. For instance, in an August 1929 article, a Josephite priest recounted the commitment of black Catholics in Algiers, an Orleans parish located on the West Bank of the Mississippi River. He recalled a family who attended the Josephite All Saints Church. He began, "Mrs. C. and her daughter, Virginia, were daily communicants, as well as the father who attended, Holy Communion every Sunday and during the week, whenever his work permits him to attend Holy Mass."¹²³ He

¹²² William M. Markoe, "Catholic Missions to the Negro," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, October 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Catholic Missions to the Negro, *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, December 1928, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Catholic Missions to the Negro, *Chronicle*, January 1929, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Catholic Missions to the Negro, *Chronicle*, February, 1929, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Orion J. Wells, "The Attitude of the Catholic Church Toward the Colored Man," March 1929, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Charles Lumpkin, "Notes of Negro Progress, May 1929, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹²³ Josephite Priest, "Catholics of the Colored Race," *Chronicle*, August 1929, 3, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

continued, “the son, Isaac is also deeply religious.”¹²⁴ It is interesting that the Josephite priest used All Saints as site of pleasant interactions between white Josephite priests and their black parishioners. The Josephites All Saints Church was at the center of a bitter struggle over the establishment of segregated parishes in 1919. While Josephite parishes like All Saints and St. Raymond Parish did attract a number of congregants, “many black Catholics raised bitter objections to each new parish proposed and boycotted them after they were established.” Resistance, however, lessened as more black Catholic schools appeared in these communities. Although Markoe allotted space for both the federation and the Josephites in *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, he nevertheless had reservations about the FCC, but kept his critiques to himself. As a result of Markoe’s silence concerning FCC allegations against the Josephites, the Josephites, in turn, found Markoe to be complicit in the federation’s attack on the Josephite missions of the South.¹²⁵

The FCC Splinters

In the early 1930s the FCC split as a result of a disagreement among its leaders concerning the general mission of the organization. By this time, each of the leaders espoused different opinions about the place of interracial co-operation in the FCC; in essence how much of the organization’s mission would entail interracial co-operation. From its inception, Turner clearly defined FCC’s membership and mission choosing to present the FCC as a black Catholic organization, run and led by black

¹²⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁵ John B. Alberts, “Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 77-98.

Catholic laymen. Turner did not downplay the possible contributions of white Catholics to the black Catholic struggle; he understood that the support of the Catholic hierarchy, all of whom were white, was necessary to insuring the vitality of the movement. Membership of the FCC consisted of two classes of members designated active and associate. Active members were black Catholic organizations “recognized by ecclesiastical authority, having a membership of not less than ten.” Associate membership included those societies both black and white who desired to “associate themselves with and to contribute to the work of the FCC.”¹²⁶

For Turner in 1930, the object of the federation remained the same as stated in its 1925 Constitution. He maintained his commitment to insuring that the FCC, “bring about a closer union and better feeling among all Catholic negroes, to advance the cause of Catholic education throughout the Negro population,” and furthermore, he held steadfast to the belief that the federation would continue “to raise the general Church status of the Negro and stimulate colored Catholics to a larger participation in racial and civic affairs.”¹²⁷ On the other hand, LaFarge continued to stress the need for white cooperation if blacks were to gain equality in the Church, while privileging the meeting of the best minds of both groups to that end. LaFarge’s purely top-down

¹²⁶ Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana* (New Orleans: A. W. Hyatt Stationery Manufacturing, 1939), 473; Annemarie Kastel, *Francis Janssens, 1843-1897: A Dutch-American Prelate* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992); Dolores Labbe, *Jim Crow Comes to Church: The Establishment of Segregated Parishes in South Louisiana*, USL History Series (Lafayette: University of Southwest Louisiana, 1971).

¹²⁷ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 302-303.

approach stood in stark contrast to Turner's bottom up approach which privileged the inclusion of all black Catholics regardless of education or social status.

Markoe's opinion concerning the FCC's mission had not changed since his membership in the group began in 1929. He still believed the organization was a great example of what he called a, "Jim Crow organization," he simply kept his thoughts to himself. In fact, in his memoirs published in 1966, Markoe' remarked,

The Josephites might have given me a warmer welcome if they knew then [I] personally [was] going to be the instrument for the complete abolition of the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States... my reason for bringing about the dissolution of the Federation would be because it itself was a segregated Jim Crow organization in its basic make up and modus operandi.

He continued,

...At this first convention that [I] attended, in 1929, I was really infiltrating, the organization, because I was a white man. [I] didn't like the self-imposed segregation that [I] saw, and liked it less that no one, neither the "radical" and "dangerous" Dr. Turner nor Fr. LaFarge took umbrage at it or even manifested an awareness of it!¹²⁸

In the same vein, Markoe hinted that his initial offer of space in *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* to the FCC was an attempt to infiltrate and change the orientation of the organization.

Despite these growing disagreements among the three leaders in the early months of 1930 concerning the organization's direction, in their letters to one another, they remained cordial.¹²⁹ In fact, it would not be until July 1930, that Turner began to

¹²⁸ Ibid., 175-176.

¹²⁹ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, February 11, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, February 24, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

notice differing strategies among himself, Markoe and LaFarge.¹³⁰ At an executive meeting in June, white attendees, critical of the FCC, accused the organization of being a Jim Crow federation, a statement that Markoe agreed with. Markoe, much like LaFarge, wanted to transform the FCC into an interracial organization, but not as an example of Catholic racial justice, as supported by LaFarge. Instead, Markoe maintained that, “the interracial aspect is not our chief motive, because our chief motive must always be the love of God and a supernatural desire “to restore all things in Christ.” That July, Markoe included an article in *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle* entitled, “Our Jim Crow Federation.”¹³¹ His article called into question the validity of the FCC’s name because the Jesuit and other high-ranking church officials thought the name of Turner’s organization was inaccurate. Markoe argued in his article that there were already a large of number whites involved in the federation, likening it to the NAACP and the Urban League, and maintained that as result it would be ludicrous to argue the Federated Colored Catholics were actually a group of only ‘Colored Catholics.’

Thomas Wyatt Turner, John LaFarge and William Markoe Face Off Against the Josephites

In 1930, the Josephites’ feud with Turner and his organization reached a pinnacle. John Gillard, a rising Josephite and author, stood in opposition to Turner,

¹³⁰Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 176.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 176-77.

his federation, and Jesuits John LaFarge and William Markoe. Gillard authored a text on the successes of the Josephite missions entitled, *The Catholic Church and the American Negro*. As a result of his contributions to the legacy of the Josephites, many of the members of the Catholic hierarchy looked to his work to better understand the needs of black Catholics in their southern missions. Gillard often used New Orleans as a great example of Josephite ingenuity as he boasted about the number of established black parishes, black parochial schools and about the contributions of a number of Josephite priests working amongst black Catholics. In his book Gillard contends that,

The city of New Orleans is the best organized city in the country so far as Catholic work for the colored is concerned, he continued, it had ten well established parishes, seventeen priests laboring exclusively for the welfare of the colored, eight well equipped parochial schools, a high school and a college.¹³²

While federation leaders took little concern with the first five chapters of the book which amounted to a statistical analysis of the Josephite missions in the south, they did take offense to the few sections in his book where Gillard proposed his own understanding and solutions to the problem of blacks in the Church.

Turner, LaFarge and Markoe critiqued Gillard's piece in a September issue of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*.¹³³ In the September issue Turner objected to the use of

¹³² John T. Gillard, S.S. J., *The Catholic Church and the American Negro: Being an Investigation of the Past and Present Activities of the Catholic Church in Behalf of the 12, 000,000 Negroes in the United States, with an Examination of the Difficulties which affect the work of the Colored Missions* (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society Press, 1929), 60.

¹³³ John LaFarge, "Fr. Gillard's Study of the Catholic Negro," Review of the Catholic Church, by Gillard, *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, July 1930, 151-152, *Thomas Wyatt*

black stereotypes in Gillard's book as well as suggestions of a deficiency in the inherent biological makeup of blacks. This was an assumption that Turner took to heart as a result of his background in biology.¹³⁴ Gillard also indicated that the "Jesuit-FCC" and their *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* only sought to slander the Josephite order and emphasized that the FCC and its leaders placed too much focus on race and not enough on one's Catholicity.¹³⁵ Gillard united with Emil Brunner, an old white Josephite residing in New Orleans, against Turner's Federation.¹³⁶ After making a number of offensive comments concerning the capability of black Catholics as leaders in his book, Gillard asserted that his text was in fact the 'official' view of the Catholic Church on the place of the Negro; an affirmation which LaFarge, Turner and Markoe dismantled in their critiques of the book.¹³⁷

Although in this period Turner remained committed to uniting black Catholics across regions he could not penetrate the Josephite South. As a consequence of Josephite opposition to the FCC, he made only one attempt to expand his organization South under the auspice of the largest black Catholic fraternal order, the Knights of

Turner Collection, 1877-1978, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Carter G. Woodson, "Review of The Catholic Church, by Gillard," *Journal of Negro History* 15 (July 1930): 373-76.

¹³⁴ Thomas Wyatt Turner, "Fr. Gillard's Book, Review of the Catholic Church, by Gillard," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, September 1930, 205-206, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹³⁵ David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State university Press, 1996), 121.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹³⁷ John LaFarge, "Father Gillard's Study of the Catholic Negro," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, (July, 1930), 151-52, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

Peter Claver. Josephite disapproval of the federation however, meant the inevitable suppression of the organization throughout region. In this way, the FCC remained a Northern based organization cut off from assisting the region where the majority of black Catholics lived.¹³⁸ Scholar John Alberts asserts that, “in New Orleans, knowledgeable critics joined the dissent but aimed their criticism against leaders of the Catholic Church and white laity rather than the Josephites.”¹³⁹

Following the federation’s critique of Gillard’s book, Gillard and Brunner sought Turner’s removal as president of the FCC. LaFarge fearing that Gillard, so respected by the Catholic hierarchy, may gain favor among them, tried to appease him by offering to help Gillard force Turner out of the organization. LaFarge had other motivations as well. He vehemently expressed his complete support of Catholic interracialism as the only method of racial change in the church and sought to transform the FCC into an interracial organization. At the time, the federation only had an interracial committee because Turner continued to advocate black self-determination as the main goal of the organization, a stance that still had a lot of organizational support. In the end, LaFarge balked on his agreement with Gillard fearing that forcing the issue of Turner’s presidency might only strengthen the black

¹³⁸ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 305.

¹³⁹ John B. Alberts, “Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans During the Jim Crow Era,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 96.

leader and his loyal backers making it difficult for him to transform the federation's mission from the inside.¹⁴⁰

In August of that year, Markoe traveled the south promoting the FCC and *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*. After giving an address to the Knights of Peter Claver in Oklahoma, its affiliate in Lafayette Louisiana invited Markoe to speak as well, unbeknownst to Emil Brunner. After Markoe left Louisiana he received a letter from Emil Brunner, the same Josephite involved in the earlier argument between the Gillard and the federation. Brunner admitted his dislike for the organization by asserting that he saw Markoe, LaFarge and Turner as Catholics only in name. In Brunner's opinion, the three were committed to viewing the problem of the Negro from only a racial perspective. He relayed his critiques of the organization to Markoe stating,

Our experience with them has taught us that in any trouble (and they are capable of raising plenty of it) they are first race men—and only as an afterthought—Catholics. No matter what may be the issue between you and them, they pass their final judgment upon it from the stand point of what they think your attitude is to the Race—and to their God-given destiny to lead the Race as they see fit. I can assure you that when troubles arise, and I have every confidence they will, they will not hesitate to pass judgment upon you as they have, times out of memory, upon the Josephites.¹⁴¹

The 1930 Detroit Convention and the Institution of New Directives

¹⁴⁰ David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State university Press, 1996), 123.

¹⁴¹ Letter, E. G. Brunner to William M. Markoe, August 28, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

The Detroit Convention of September 1930 changed the structure of the FCC and initiated the transformation of a predominantly black self-determinist federation into an interracial organization controlled by white clergy. That year, the convention focused its attention on 'The Negro in Industry,' since they were meeting in the industrial city of Detroit. While Turner was able to attend this meeting despite his feeling ill, some of Turner's supporters were unable to make it, these included; vice-president George Conrad and Eugene Clark, one of the Turner's oldest supporters. At the meeting Turner, LaFarge and Markoe, proposed a change in the group's directives. A portion of the new directives stated, "the Federation's prime objective is to unite all colored Catholic parishes and already existing colored Catholic societies for the purpose of national Catholic action in all its phases." In Turner's opening address he stressed Catholic action rather than a focus on obtaining facts about discriminatory acts committed by the Church. He stated, "...it behooves us to be concerned less and less with the differences that may be found among us and to place more and more emphasis upon the things which we all have in common as Catholics."¹⁴²

Each new chapter of the FCC established after the 1930 directive had to participate in some form of Catholic Action, "beyond mere membership in the

¹⁴² Thomas Wyatt Turner, "Address Made at Detroit Convention," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, December 1930, 289, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

federation,” and they also needed ecclesiastical approval.¹⁴³ Although the directives passed, they were not officially included in the organization’s constitution.¹⁴⁴ The directives later agreed upon in Detroit were published in the March issue of *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, entitled “Catholic Action as the Objective of the Federation: Some Suggestions for the Second Day of Detroit.” In this, LaFarge redefined Catholic Action as “apostolic,” and applied his outlook to a number of different areas including; “education, the retreat movement, young people’s welfare, rural life, the liturgical movement, foreign and home missions and the “Interracial Movement.” The regulations concretized in Detroit sanctioned ecclesiastical acceptance and direction of all federation chapters, exactly what Turner did not want for his black lay organization. LaFarge contended that the, “FCC should be organized so it could carry out many of these activities that reached above and beyond mere racial protest and aimed at the greater glory of Catholicism.” By the end of August that year, *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle* advertised itself as a “National Monthly Inter-racial Magazine.”¹⁴⁵ After his run-in with the Josephites, Turner, now even more so,

¹⁴³ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 64.

¹⁴⁴ David Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State university Press, 1996), 124.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 124; “Catholic Action as the Objective of the Federation,” *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, 3 (May 1930), 51-52, 66, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to William Markoe, January 25, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; John LaFarge, “Two Echoes of the Convention,” *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle*, November, 1930, 271-722, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; John

accepted that the FCC needed white support and ecclesiastical approval in order to succeed in its mission and ultimately to continue functioning. He embraced this need in a 1930 letter to a Catholic layman from the Midwest, in which he asserted,

We have been striving for some time to interest white Catholics in an inter-racial movement which would insure justice in spiritual and temporal practices throughout the country. It is well known that Catholic institutions have been as intolerant racially as any other, and this matter can be corrected only by cooperative action of both races.¹⁴⁶

Initially, Turner did not see the change in directives as the beginning of a major organizational shift, he merely viewed the events of the Detroit convention as a step toward the promotion of a better Catholicity, however a vital shift in the organization did take place. The directives moved the group away from a focus on black interests to a discussion of Catholicity.¹⁴⁷

At the close of 1930, Turner attempted to calm tensions, which had arisen between the federation and Josephites following the FCC's veracious critiques of Gillard's book. Turner sent a letter to Markoe criticizing black writer Carter G. Woodson's discussion of the Josephites in the *Journal of Negro History*.¹⁴⁸ In his article Woodson argued that blacks hated the Josephites. In his letter to Markoe, Turner stated,

LaFarge, "Principles Underlying the Federated Colored Catholics, undated, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁶ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to J. J. Heithaus, November 1, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁷ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1988), 302-303.

¹⁴⁸ Carter G. Woodson, "Review of The Catholic Church, by Gillard," *Journal of Negro History* 15 (July 1930): 373-76.

It is true that certain practices of the Order have been subjects of criticism by thinking colored men and women from time to time, but there is no basis for the assertion that the criticisms have come from a spirit of hatred. My impression is that a fuller understanding is maturing between the Josephites and the thoughtful of the group. As the fathers of this Society come to see more fully the Negro at his best. I predict a much more productive cooperation than we have had in the past.¹⁴⁹

Despite the federation's confrontation with the Josephites at the end of 1930, in the first few months of 1931, the group's leaders turned their attention back to the business of developing and promoting the FCC as well as *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*.¹⁵⁰ In the summer of 1931, John LaFarge penned a letter to Turner that once again suggested that the federation be brought in line with other national organizations, which meant, the president would occupy a largely nominal position in the federation and real control of the organization would belong to a permanent

¹⁴⁹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, November 6, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, William M. Markoe to Thomas Wyatt Turner, December 15, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, December 9, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵⁰ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, February 7, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, February 7, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, February 13, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, March 28, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, April 7, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, April 19, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, April 20, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

secretary, “with or without a small board of trustees.” He suggested the president should be elected annually and should only be reelected once, and that succeeding presidents be pulled from different parts of the country. The “continuing body” or the secretariat would devote itself to maintaining, “the integral policy of the organization.” With the secretariat as a permanently established body, Turner would only be tasked with maintaining, “contact with every part of the Federation.” The annually elected Presidents would travel the country promoting the FCC and LaFarge suggested that they may bring, “more appeal to the imagination than the Federation at present has.” The Jesuit also proposed the creation of a small board of four to five members, elected in rotation, as a method of checks and balances. The group would be given the ability to outvote the president, “in case of any differences.” The Executive Committee would exist only as a Council, “with whatever rights it would be necessary to give them.” LaFarge concluded that this organizational restructuring would insure the security of the FCC, and in his eyes be the organization’s, “strongest point of survival in the collaboration with the Social Action Department of the N.C.W.C.”¹⁵¹

The ambiguity surrounding the enforcement of the Detroit directives became a problem for the FCC. In a July 1931 letter from LaFarge to Turner, LaFarge recounted the incident between FCC Field Agent William Bruce and white St Ignatius Father Vincent Dever, a priest who had established a predominantly black parish in

¹⁵¹ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, June 19, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

West Philadelphia. After Father Dever called the meeting to order, he asked LaFarge to act as Chairman. After LaFarge read over the Detroit directives, the same instructions that had not been included in the original FCC constitution, Bruce protested the constitutionality of the directives. LaFarge called for Bruce's immediate removal as Field Secretary for the FCC and proposed that the future of the group in Philadelphia be placed in the hands of Father Dever. Father LaFarge charged that the group, which met under the leadership of Bruce, failed to follow the proscribed guidelines to become an approved chapter of the FCC. LaFarge warned Turner that Mr. Bruce, "is wholly disqualified to serve as a leader of the Catholic cause in Philadelphia or elsewhere."¹⁵² He cautioned Turner that ecclesiastical support for the creation of any new chapter of FCC was necessary for the survival of the organization.¹⁵³

LaFarge concluded his July letter to Turner with the assertion that, "with all the good will in the world I cannot continue my cooperation with the federation if Mr. Bruce continues to represent it in Philadelphia." LaFarge stated that, "unless once and for all we can wholeheartedly cooperate with the authorities of the Church, without evasion or danger of compromise, I shall have to resign from the federation." LaFarge assured Turner that he had the backing of other members present at the meeting who were also displeased with the way Mr. Bruce handled the situation. This

¹⁵² Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, July 13, 1931, 1-4, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1-4; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, July 25, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

statement, was of course, untrue. Turner agreed to follow LaFarge's instruction for fear he might lose clerical support. He limited the command of the local chairman, which functioned to indirectly decrease the involvement of the field agent. Ultimately this allowed Turner to decrease the control of Bruce in Philadelphia without, "straining any clause of the constitution."¹⁵⁴

Following the incident in Philadelphia, Turner, LaFarge and Markoe began planning the FCC's upcoming convention. The FCC now claimed a membership of 70,000 members. The three sent invitations to several high-ranking church officials some of whom could not attend the upcoming conference.¹⁵⁵ The FCC's seventh convention, held in St. Louis that year, went off without a hitch, but following the convention the federation faced financial problems. The focus of that year's

¹⁵⁴ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, July 25, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵⁵ Letter, Fr. Frederick to William M. Markoe, July 23, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, William M. Markoe to Thomas Wyatt Turner, July 14, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, July 18, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, William M. Markoe to Thomas Wyatt Turner, July 30, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, William M. Markoe to Thomas Wyatt Turner, July 30, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, August 4, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, August 4, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William A. Prater, August 25, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William A. Prater, August 29, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

convention was black Catholic education. Over the course of the convention, members drafted letters to the Catholic hierarchy asking them to end discrimination in Catholic schools.¹⁵⁶

Following the St. Louis convention, Turner, LaFarge and Markoe in the final months of 1931 turned their attention toward dealing with the financial impact of the depression on Catholic organizations and institutions, particularly those assisting blacks. Some members of the Catholic Church, when pressured by financial collapse during the Great Depression, were more than willing to abandon black Catholics in lieu of institutions beholden to white Catholics, for Church hierarchy had to make decisions about where to devote resources. *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* suffered and the Cardinal Gibbons Institute also faced the possibility of closure as a result of the Great Depression. Similarly, the Benedictine Fathers in Brookland gave up their work with black Catholic students at Howard University.¹⁵⁷ The convention was a success in a

¹⁵⁶ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988.), 89.

¹⁵⁷ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, September 16, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, September 16, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to S. L. Theobald, September 21, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, September 21, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

financial sense as Father Edward Kramer, of the Catholic Mission Board of Mission Work among the Colored People made a substantial contribution to the federation.¹⁵⁸

The FCC Attempts to Organize the South

The Federation's problems with the Josephites continued in the final months of 1931. In October of that year, Turner recalled a discussion he had with a priest he referred to as Fr. Elliot concerning an article written by a young Josephite in the *Catholic Harvest*. The young Josephite directed his article at the Knights of Peter Claver in Mobile, Alabama, a black Catholic fraternal order, which had been affiliated with the FCC for several years. Despite its trouble with Josephite officials in New Orleans, the FCC did succeed in creating alliances with other chapters of the Knights of Peter Claver and other black social orders in southern states like Alabama and Oklahoma. Father Elliot, referred to the tone of the article as a, "verbal lashing," and did not take too kindly to the young Jesuit's approach. As a consequence, Elliot asked Turner to write an article in response. After reviewing the Josephite article, Turner asserted that it "seemed decidedly to get back at our convention."¹⁵⁹ In October of that year, Turner sent LaFarge a draft of his response to the Josephite article. Turner's response entitled, "An Ill-Timed Comparison," focused on disproving Josephite accusations. Particularly, he focused his attention on the

¹⁵⁸ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, September 23, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; John LaFarge, "The Bridge of St. Louis," *America*, September 26, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵⁹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, October 13, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

Josephite claim that the FCC failed to help raise funds for the colored missions in the South, and that because of this, they were not a group of action. In his response, Turner exclaimed, “there are other forms of Catholic Action besides that of aiding the mission, necessary as this matter is.” What was important, he continued, was the FCC’s, “study of questions that affect the welfare of vast numbers of our people, and the frank and loyal discussion of these questions in the light of Catholic teaching.”¹⁶⁰ This too should be considered a form of Catholic Action. After reading Turner’s draft, LaFarge sent Turner a letter assuring him that he had already written and submitted an article to *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle* in response to the young Josephite’s *Catholic Harvest* article.

LaFarge believed Turner’s article might, “shoot off too much ammunition all at once,” and he warned Turner that if he came out with a scathing article directed at the Josephite(s) that, “it will be killing a mosquito with a cannonade,” in essence overkill. In the end, LaFarge chose not to forcefully confront the Josephites but to instead, “put back the burden of proving our Catholicism on those who can do so.”¹⁶¹ The Jesuit suggested that, “the Josephites may be anxious to keep up the appearance of the Turner-Josephite dispute, making it personal,” he continued, “the more this can be got away from and kept in the field of principle where they have no come-back,

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Wyatt Turner, “An Ill-Timed Comparison”, October 15, 1931, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶¹ John LaFarge’s Response to Colored Harvest Article, October 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, October 16th, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

the more approval from the authorities we shall receive, as to our mode of action.”¹⁶²

LaFarge thought that his then untitled editorial appeared more tame and less personal than Turner’s response. Instead of focusing on specific Josephite accusations, LaFarge simply reaffirmed the necessity of the federation, stating,

I think I am safe in saying that the seven-year-old Federated Colored Catholics of the United States is the only organization in the country where Negro Catholics and their spiritual advisors and friends may meet from all sections of the country and from all kinds of bodies to discuss an plan out the best means of advancing the Negro in the Church. ¹⁶³

In his letter to LaFarge on the last day of October, Turner affirmed that he thought LaFarge’s piece, “covered the point quite adequately,” and he could honestly, “say was less personal” than his own.¹⁶⁴

In November and December of 1931, Turner and his colleagues turned their attention to the need for integrated black Catholic primary parochial schools and the need for more Catholic secondary institutions. The Josephite led Catholic University of America located in Washington D.C., a grooming place for white Catholic clergy, took the spotlight in December of that year. Turner, along with a small committee, spent time walking the grounds of the University speaking to any clergy who would

¹⁶² Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, October 31, 1931, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, November 4, 1931, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶³ John LaFarge’s Response to Colored Harvest Article, October 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶⁴ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, October 31, 1931, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, November 4, 1931, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

hear their appeals concerning black Catholic education and its importance in creating black Catholic leaders. While at the school, Turner spoke with Bishop Hadley of North Carolina concerning the often-quoted statement that Southern Bishops won't have Negro priests. Bishop Hadley assured Turner that the position of Southern Bishops had not been put forth in the proper manner.¹⁶⁵ Before the hierarchy Turner argued the need for black Catholic access to the Josephite controlled Catholic University of America, however, these pleas fell on deaf ears.¹⁶⁶

In late December, Turner planned to attend the American Association for the Advancement of Science in New Orleans. While he did not travel to the Crescent City with other members of the FCC, he used these kinds of science conventions and conferences to promote the federation.¹⁶⁷ Despite the fact that blacks had by 1931 adjusted to segregated Catholic facilities in New Orleans, Turner pushed for racial change as he finally became acquainted with Catholic activity in the city. A large group of prominent Catholics of color made it easy for Turner to become familiarized

¹⁶⁵ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, November 16, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; William M. Markoe, *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, December 1, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; The committee consisted of Dr. Clark of Miner Teachers College, Mr. H.M Smith, Secretary and Turner.

¹⁶⁶ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to S.L. Theobald, December 3, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, December 7, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to S.L. Theobald, December 26, 1931, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶⁷ Dr. Thomas W. Turner, Ph. D. traveled to New Orleans to attend several meetings hosted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science," at Xavier University, December 30, 1931.

with the work being done there in the interest of black Catholics. While in New Orleans he addressed the Knights of Peter Claver, on the aims of the FCC, and asked the Honorable Louis Israel, leader of the Knights, questions on how best to organize blacks in the south.¹⁶⁸

Upon request to speak at Xavier University concerning the mission of his federation, Turner spoke of its struggle for black equality in the church and the influence of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* in furthering its work. In his address he solicited financial support for the journal from the Knights, which was now feeling the debilitating financial impact of the Great Depression. He spoke of the Federation's commitment to bettering the condition of black Catholics everywhere. Turner mentioned the interracial committee now working under the auspices of the FCC, but focused his energies primarily on how black Catholic leaders in a unified effort could affect lasting change. Turner also met with the Archbishop of New Orleans, John Shaw, to discuss the problem of a native clergy. He visited with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and attempted to sit down with the Sisters of the Holy Family, but time and distance proved an obstacle. A black Catholic family housed him during his stay in New Orleans. As he drove himself around the city, Turner beheld "the new Xavier University, Dillard University and Corpus Christi Church, all of which were devoted to black Catholics."¹⁶⁹ He left New Orleans quite

¹⁶⁸ Thomas W. Turner, "A Visit to Catholic New Orleans," December 1931, 1-4, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-4.

impressed, but still unremitting in the racial progress that could occur in the South concerning the betterment of the “Negro’ condition.” This visit to New Orleans revealed the strides already made for the betterment of black Catholics in the Deep South despite continued segregation. Turner did not leave New Orleans without arousing the attention of the Josephites who complained about Turner’s visit to the city. Josephites reported that while in their city, Turner made no effort to visit any Josephite pastors and so thus, could not know all there was to know about the Josephite missions in the city. New Orleans Josephite priest, Fr. Lambert J. Welbers, took particular offense to this and sent Markoe a letter stating his disappointment in Turner. After Markoe passed the letter on to Turner, Turner responded to Welbers’ letter, speaking plainly about discrimination in the Catholic Church. Turner declared, “there are no Race leaders among Catholic Negroes. Up to the present time the way has been closed whereby they may come into positions of leadership...”¹⁷⁰

As the events of the year began to settle in the aftermath of the St. Louis convention, particularly the ongoing feud between the FCC and the Josephites and the incident in Philadelphia, Fr. Dever had succeeded in organizing a legitimate chapter of the federation in the city. As a consequence of the incident in Philadelphia where the Detroit directives met opposition, the FCC planned to revise their constitution, with plans to present it at the 1932 convention. In January of 1932, the FCC held its

¹⁷⁰ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Fr. L.J. Welbers, February 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988.), 89.

annual Executive meeting in New York. There, Turner reported on his visits to the Catholic University of America in November of the previous year. At the meeting, LaFarge finally convinced others to fall in line with his plan to create a board of regional vice-presidents. They elected Father Dever of Philadelphia to chair the new committee tasked with revising the constitution to include LaFarge's restructuring plan as well as the Detroit directives.¹⁷¹

Over the course of first several months of 1932, the federation leaders exchanged letters discussing their concerns about Father Dever's proposed revisions to the constitution.¹⁷² In June of that year, LaFarge expressed to Turner that Dever's revised constitution did not, "seem to me very desirable," but complicated and unnecessary. Dever proposed eliminating units of the Federation that did not conform to the requirements proposed in the Detroit directives. LaFarge argued that if Dever's

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁷² Letter, S.L. Theobald to the Executive Committee, January 8, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, February 1, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, February 19, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, March 10, 1932, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William M. Markoe, March 16, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, March 19, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, March 24, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, April 1, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, April 29, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

suggestions were instituted the federation would simply seem, “like a parallel to the N.C.C.M and the N.C.C.W.” The Jesuit believed that the FCC needed to develop a policy to “improve in general the attitude of the lay public and clerical publics.” LaFarge asserted that “merely juxtaposing the doctrine and the specific instances” of discrimination would accomplish nothing. In essence, he proposed a program of education on three main lines: first, the FCC would seek to development a sense of social responsibility among the public; second, a statement by blacks reflecting on their personal experience with discrimination and particular needs of their social group, and finally, “the application of social responsibility to remedy the situation revealed by these facts.”¹⁷³ LaFarge questioned whether the organization should continue to meet yearly or less often, and he even suggested breaking the organization up into regional entities versus maintaining a national oversight.¹⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Turner continued to travel promoting the federation in an effort to create alliances with black Catholic organizations across the U.S.

In June 1932, at the Federation’s final executive committee meeting of the year, LaFarge went a step further and suggested members change the name of the organization to reflect the recent constitutional revisions. LaFarge proposed the name, National Catholic Interracial Federation, believing that even black unity, which

¹⁷³ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, June 15, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to S.L. Theobald, July 9, 1930, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷⁴ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, August 6, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

Turner had so fervently advocated, relied on an interracial approach. In a July 1932 article in *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, LaFarge stated that he thought his proposal for a change name made sense and declared that the name, National Catholic Interracial Federation, "whether desirable or not, does express what has developed to be the primary purpose of the organization." He continued, "this purpose may be summed up in eleven words as "the promotion of relations between the races based on Christian principles."¹⁷⁵

Turner agreed with LaFarge's suggestions concerning a more structured national policy and the need for continued hierarchical sanction, but paid little attention to the suggestion of a name change. Turner had a few proposals of his own concerning FCC membership and ecclesiastical approval. In his response to LaFarge in an August 6th letter, Turner stated, "I am beginning to feel that we ought to allow some representation to isolated individual membership. There is a wide complaint about this, which I think justifiable." Although this proposition stood in opposition to the Detroit directives, Turner feared that if he denied access to certain members because they were unapproved then the FCC would become too much like "the parish." If this were to happen, Turner continued, the Federation would, "lose its significance entirely." He had always been cautious of giving church officials too much power over the federation. Turner believed that if too much focus was placed on first legitimizing black Catholic groups before they could be recognized as a part

¹⁷⁵ John LaFarge, "Doing-the Truth," *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*, July 1932, 130, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

of the FCC, that it would serve to exclude a large number of black Catholics interested in any kind of affiliation with the organization. He concluded, "I think it would be dangerous to have an organization of this kind which could be killed by the simple act of a pastor's withdrawal of his groups."¹⁷⁶

LaFarge did not agree with Turner's point of view concerning membership in the FCC. He found the idea of individual memberships to be irreconcilable with the idea of a federation. LaFarge asserted that despite how scattered people might be there still remained the possibility of forming some kind of unit with ecclesiastical sanction. He continued, "individuals who have not enough cohesion or zeal to fit into even a loose and simple organization, will form, as I see it, poor material for the Federation." Because he considered the Detroit directives a solution to the question of authorization, he reiterated the power of the directive to speak to the issue of individual membership.¹⁷⁷ LaFarge warned Turner that if he did not subscribe to his ideas about how the FCC should function that the hierarchy would establish an interracial organization in lieu of the FCC, one, which would be led by white clergy and not by black laymen. He persisted, stating that the pitfall of the organization and its movement may be, "placing the general objective," the elimination of any and all barriers within the church, before the "particular objective," that of racial equality. He concluded his letter to Turner, insisting, "without interracial charity, there can be no

¹⁷⁶ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to John LaFarge, August 17, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷⁷ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, August 20, 1932, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

justice.” While LaFarge believed that a black clergy would be helpful in securing better race relations in the church, he thought it unwise and “impractical to sit down and wait for them.”¹⁷⁸

Original FCC member Eugene Clark also had some criticisms of Fr. Dever.’s proposed constitution. Clark believed that Dever’s revised constitution including the Detroit directives placed the federation under too much hierarchical control. Clark, loyal to Turner, continued to express the 1925 aim of the convention, “to eliminate any and all barriers within the Church organization which limit the opportunities of the Negro Catholic in his enjoyment of all his religious rights and privileges.”¹⁷⁹ After reading Clark’s objections to Dever, LaFarge sent Turner a letter asserting his thoughts on the importance of ecclesiastical authority and the aim of the FCC. LaFarge reminded Turner that, “all lay public activity in such fields is directly subject to ecclesiastical authority, which had the right and duty not merely to advise, but to prescribe norms according to which it shall be conducted in specific instances.” On the topic of the FCC’s primary objective, LaFarge also disagreed with Clark, asserting that the primary aim of the federation was not, “to eliminate any and all barriers within the church organization which limit the opportunities of the Negro Catholic,” but was instead, “the establishment of race relationships based upon Christian principles.” In a letter to Turner, H.M. Smith, another original member of

¹⁷⁸ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, August 6, 1932, 1-3, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷⁹ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, August 20, 1932, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

FCC, backed Clark's assertion that the new constitution should maintain the original aim of the organization.¹⁸⁰ In Turner's mind the aim of the FCC had never changed, all that had changed was the inclusion of an interracial committee. In the eyes of Turner, the FCC had never fully committed to a primarily interracial movement for black equality.

As FCC leaders prepared for their annual convention in September of that year, LaFarge continued to discuss his thoughts on the organization's structure. He maintained his assertion that the group should not allow individual membership but should instead be organized like all other Catholic lay groups under the ecclesiastical approval of local bishops. While LaFarge assured Turner that he did not plan to recommend in writing a name change for the organization, he did propose that the name change be given deeper thought.¹⁸¹ Two of the FCC's key members did not make it to the September convention, Constance Daniels, the principle of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, and Father Dever of Philadelphia. Daniels declined to attend the convention as a result of the failing Cardinal Gibbons Institute, as it struggled financially.¹⁸² Dever did not attend and declined to remain the head of the revision committee. He stated that his reason for not attending the convention was because he

¹⁸⁰ Letter, H.M. Smith to Thomas Turner, August 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸¹ Letter, John LaFarge to Thomas Wyatt Turner, August 25, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸² Letter, The Board of Trustees of Cardinal Gibbons Institute to John LaFarge, August 26, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 97.

didn't "think it wise to let the impression grow that a few of us white members of the Federation are running it," and Dever concluded that, "I think we could do as much good, if not more, in an advisory capacity." Markoe soon replaced Dever as the chair of the revision committee.¹⁸³

***Thomas Wyatt Turner, John LaFarge, William Markoe and the Decline of the
FCC***

Although the New York chapter of the FCC hosted the September 1932 convention there is little evidence of the nature of LaFarge's participation. The sources reveal that Markoe seemed to take a much more active role in the convention as the new chair of the revision committee. At the conference, LaFarge and Markoe recommended the National Catholic Inter-Racial Federation be the new name of the organization, for it, "indicated what had actually occurred in the FCC." Only following the convention did the public become aware of the name change when *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* released articles on the events of the convention. A copy of the revised constitution, authored by Markoe, appeared in the journal alongside a short explanation for the change in the FCC's name. The new constitution eliminated all uses of the term "colored" from its constitution. The name change was, "intended to symbolize a widening of interests in the organization, which now becomes identified with the whole Catholic body and is no longer exclusively a Negro group." The

¹⁸³ Letter, Vincent A. Dever to Thomas Turner, September 1, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; William M. Markoe, "An Interracial Role: Memoirs of Rev. William M. Markoe S.J. 1900-1966," 241 (Typescript 1967) Jesuit Missouri Province Archives, St. Louis.

change in name was also acknowledgement of “the important part played by white clergy in the group’s activities which hitherto have been of an unofficial nature.”¹⁸⁴

Although the new constitution still stressed black concerns it did so within the framework of an interracial organization. According to LaFarge and Markoe the object of the Federation would be to, “bring about a clearer union and better feeling among all Catholics’ to promote relations between the races based on Christian principles.” This much LaFarge had already communicated to Turner prior to the September meeting. LaFarge continued, the main goal of the organization should be, “to advance the cause of Catholic education throughout the Negro population’ to seek to raise the general awareness of the Negro in the Church and to stimulate Catholic Negroes to a larger participation in racial and civil affairs,” in their various communities and in the country broadly. This final revision reflected LaFarge and Markoe’s thoughts on the development of the federation. Turner expressed his disappointment that Markoe and LaFarge had taken it upon themselves to shift the focus of the FCC and he asserted that only due to a shifting membership could this organizational transformation be possible. By this point, Turner believed that regional membership in the original FCC had shifted in a considerable way. Initially, in the federation’s early years, membership hailed mostly from upper and Deep South states with a spattering of northern members. Now most of the group, he stated, “lived above the Mason & Dixon line and had a phobia about the word Negro.” By this time,

¹⁸⁴ Suggested By-Laws Federated Colored Catholics, September 1932, 9, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

LaFarge had gained a great deal of influence in the North so when he threatened to resign if the name change didn't occur; Turner was left with little recourse. Although Turner did not agree with the name change, he saw Markoe and his *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* as well as LaFarge and his connections to members of the Catholic hierarchy, as indispensable parts of the Federation.¹⁸⁵

Although Turner had acquiesced to the name change, LaFarge and Markoe's revisions did not change his mind about the overall aim of the federation. Turner stated, "It was not that I considered the name entirely satisfactory, but the motive for changing was based upon queer reasoning supported by the two clergy that it was better to put effort primarily on interracial activity than upon increasing racial solidarity and racial improvement." Ultimately, while the name change was a sore spot for Turner, he was more concerned with the future control of the federation. In a letter to Eugene Clark that month, Turner stated, "we shall need very strong hands to keep it as an instrument of the Negro layman."¹⁸⁶ Although Turner stressed the need to insure that control of the Federation remained in the hand of blacks, he still remained committed to supporting the Federation's, "white friends, as many as possible, into an inter-racial committee."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 302-303.

¹⁸⁶ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Eugene Clark, September 18, 1932, 1-3, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸⁷ William M. Markoe, "An Interracial Role, Memoirs of William Markoe, 1900-1906," 229, (Typescript 1967) Jesuit Missouri Province Archives, St. Louis.

That same month Elmo M. Anderson penned a letter to Turner alerting him of Father Markoe's appointment as Deputy National Organizer of the National Catholic Interracial Federation. This appointment highlights a major turning point in the relationship between Markoe and Turner and in the organization's priorities. In September of 1932, Markoe gave up his pastorate at St. Elizabeth's in order to dedicate more time to the National Catholic Interracial Federation. Markoe insisted before Anderson that he had no intentions of taking over the organization or changing its focus but simply wanted to dedicate more time to the cause of racial equality. Turner feared that Markoe's appointment to this position spelled disaster for the organization's racial focus. He believed that Markoe would convince different chapters to move away from the idea of the federation organizing on behalf of black interests with a black leadership to an interracial organization under the auspices of the Catholic hierarchy.¹⁸⁸

In the month after the convention, discussion between Turner and Markoe reached a climax. In October of that year, Markoe changed the name of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* to *Interracial Review* after LaFarge suggested he do so. Markoe now wanted the magazine to reflect the shift in the organization's aim and its revised constitution. This instance intensified the debate between Markoe, LaFarge and Turner. Markoe at that point was the head of publicity of the federation and he had full control of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle*. The name change came about in

¹⁸⁸ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 99.

response to several complaints of leading Church officials concerning the journal's name, coupled with the shared belief between LaFarge and Markoe that a name change would better promote the journal.¹⁸⁹ Turner reacted to this change by writing two letters of dissent, one to the Federation's Executive Committee and the second to the organization's Spiritual Director, Rev. Michael Curley. In his letter to the committee and Curley he explained the reluctant compromise he made to change the name of the organization and expressed that while he was grateful for clerical support he wondered if it had in fact been at the expense of the federation's original aim and procedure. Turner assured Curley that he did not want the Archbishop to act on the matter but that he just wanted to alert him of the events. The federation leader asserted that he would notify Markoe that *Interracial Review* was no longer considered the official organ of the Federation.¹⁹⁰ In Curley's response to Turner he explained to him that there was little he could do because the actions that had been taken at the annual meeting were at the behest of the federation's delegates. At the conclusion of the Archbishop's response, he informed Turner he had been in contact with LaFarge about the matter and that he supported the Jesuit, "whose interest in our

¹⁸⁹ Letter, William M. Markoe to Thomas Wyatt Turner, September 23, 1932, 4, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁰ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Michael Curley, October 6, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 99.

colored people I know is profoundly sincere event though some of his views may not meet with the approval of everybody.”¹⁹¹

Turner also relayed his concerns about the shift in aim and structure of the organization to Markoe. Markoe immediately penned a letter to Turner, assuring him that he had no intention of assuming control of the federation; rather, he simply wanted to, “be allowed to work to make the Federation be and mean something big.” Markoe declared that since he had been elected editor of *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle* by members of the federation, under the Detroit directives, he could not be removed from office, “except by a two-thirds vote of the executive committee.” Markoe was not just the editor of *St. Elizabeth’s Chronicle* he was also the owner and so had every right to change the journal’s name if he believed it benefitted the organization. According to Markoe, the change in title occurred in order to bring the journal into alignment with the new aim of the federation as agreed upon at the September convention. Markoe declared, “you may be sure, Doctor, that if you had not consented to a change of name for the Federation, it would have been changed over your protest and you could not have been re-elected President.” Markoe recounted that Turner had been, “beaten by two to one,” which signaled that, “others were vitally interested.”¹⁹² It is not clear if LaFarge was the deciding vote but one can only assume based on his changing perspective of the federation’s aim.

¹⁹¹ Letter, Michael Curley to Thomas Wyatt Turner, October 8, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹² Letter, William M. Markoe to Thomas Wyatt Turner, October 10, 1932, 1-4, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

The regional divide in the organization became more apparent in the years that followed the September 1932 convention. After hearing about the change in name of Markoe's magazine, Eugene Clark wrote a letter to Markoe alerting him that his change had aroused dissent in the federation. Clark asserted that the controversy that now brewed between the three leaders was a result of regional politics. Clark wrote,

The fight which the clergy and certain northern Negroes who are comparatively new members of the Federation put up to change the Federation's name convinced our representatives to the Convention that there was a conspiracy to modify the character of the organization so that it would be ineffectual in representing the true sentiment of the whole Negro group.¹⁹³

Federation members loyal to Turner became convinced that Markoe and his *Interracial Review* misrepresented the original aims of the committee and went against a majority opinion at the convention to initiate this shift. These members now agreed with Turner's suspicions that Markoe and LaFarge were interested in taking over the federation. Turner proclaimed that the priests' involvement with the federation groups in Chicago, New York and St. Louis were, "tricky political plays," in a bid to turn these cities to view the federation as a Jim Crow organization. Clark spoke of Turner's selflessness in the push for black equality and his dedication to improving the Negro condition in the Catholic Church.¹⁹⁴

After the first issues of *Interracial Review* appeared in late October, Turner could no longer remain silent. Maintaining his refusal to permit Markoe's journal to

¹⁹³ Letter, Eugene Clark to William M. Markoe, October 17, 1932, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

represent the federation, Turner sent a press release to Catholic and secular papers. In his release, Turner maintained that Markoe's *Interracial Review* was not the official organ of the federation and that, "any such announcement now is premature and unauthorized."¹⁹⁵ Clark attempted to mediate the situation between Turner and Markoe believing that their feud reflected poorly on the organization. Clark invited some of the original members of the FCC, Markoe and Turner to his home in early November. Clark implored Turner to try and come to some kind of common ground with Markoe insisting that many blacks were now supporting interracialism.¹⁹⁶

Towards the end of November another major turning point in the federation occurred when Markoe brought formal charges against Turner and convened an unauthorized meeting of the executive committee. Under Article III of the revised by-laws, Markoe charged Turner with neglect of duty as a National Officer of the federation and argued that the executive Committee, "by the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds thereof, may declare his (or her) office vacant." In layman's terms, the charges against Turner were, "unwarranted assumption of authority." Turner was indicted with having placed the future of the federation in jeopardy over the name of the journal and had made false accusations about a Jesuit plot to assume control in his letter he sent to the Catholic and secular presses. Turner was also charged with being

¹⁹⁵ Press Release, Thomas Turner, "Letter to Catholic and Secular Press by the President," October 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 99.

¹⁹⁶ Letter, Eugene Clark to Thomas Wyatt Turner, November 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

anti-clerical in his denial of the interracial approach that had been sanctioned at the New York convention.¹⁹⁷

Initially, Turner did not respond to the charges brought against him choosing instead to publish an article on the federation's struggle to carry on under the leadership of black laymen. Black laymen loyal to the original aims of the FCC and its president reacted fiercely to Markoe and LaFarge's attempted redirection of the organization. Older members of the FCC grappled with attending what they referred to as a, "rump session." The meeting had not been called by Turner, so under the constitution was not a valid meeting, and the short notice given possible attendees, would have prohibited many of Turner's supporters from attending. Long time Turner supporter, William Prater, did not have the funds to attend the meeting.¹⁹⁸ Eugene Clark relayed his support of Turner in a letter to the executive committee that month. On November 30th Turner wrote a letter to Rev. Michael J. Curley asking his advice on how to rid the organization of Markoe. Turner told Curley that LaFarge and Markoe's propaganda in *Interracial Review* had completely split the organization in two, particularly their groups in St. Louis and Chicago.¹⁹⁹ Despite widespread protest

¹⁹⁷ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Members of the Executive Committee, November 16, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁸ Letter, William A. Prater to Thomas Wyatt Turner, November 28, 1932, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁹ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Michael Curley, November 30, 1932, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 99.

by loyal backers of Turner, Markoe subsequently held the unauthorized meeting in November of that year in Chicago. Eleven members attended the meeting headed by Father Markoe. Nine people from the St. Louis, Chicago and the Ohio groups backed Markoe and two, one from Chicago and other from Washington voted against Markoe's proposal.²⁰⁰ Turner was unable to attend the Chicago meeting because he had already committed to another engagement.

Following the impromptu Chicago meeting, Mr. George W.B Conrad, Vice President of the FCC's Ohio branch and supporter of Markoe and LaFarge, sent Turner a letter, which notified him that he had been removed as president of the federation. Conrad, Markoe and LaFarge's group would now be called the National Federation for the Promotion of Better Race Relations while Turner would retain the name, National Catholic Interracial Federation, as the name of his wing of the former FCC. Turner denied Conrad's claim to the presidency, calling the concerted attack by Markoe, LaFarge and their followers, "an attack upon Negro leadership." The black press came out in full support of Turner, particularly the *Baltimore Afro-American*, which called the incident, "an attempt by white priests to control a black organization."²⁰¹ The *Pittsburgh Courier* asserted that Turner had been removed for two reasons, the first being false publicity and the second scandal. The article traced the opposition of two schools of thought which appeared at the New York

²⁰⁰ Letter, Eugene Clark to the Executive Committee, November 29, 1932, 2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰¹ "Catholics Oust Dr. Turner," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 17, 1932, 1, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

convention, one seeking what the paper termed a “purely colored organization,” while the other sought an “interracial organization.” Following their coverage of the event, the black press asserted that when Catholics in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington were approached with the possibility of removing Turner as president, they refused. Turner decided to postpone his response to the black press, choosing first to speak with Archbishop Curley the groups Spiritual Director. The N.C.W.C unlike the black press chose to print both sides of the story. Although the organization’s agreed upon annual executive meeting was still slated for January the following year, Conrad decided that it was unnecessary, and refused to attend.²⁰²

In 1933, W.E.B. DuBois requested Turner write an article on the Negro and the Catholic Church.²⁰³ Although Turner told DuBois that he could not write the article because of time constraints, he did send him material, which summed up the present troubles within the organization. In the letter he blamed Markoe for the current schism within the organization stating that Markoe was, “a young Jesuit Clergyman from the west who feels that everything is wrong which we have been doing and that the Lord has called him to change it.”²⁰⁴ He assured DuBois that contrary to popular belief, he had not been removed as head of the organization, and that statements released by Markoe in the press so far had been completely false.

²⁰² “False Publicity Charge to ‘Professor’ by Federation,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 17, 1932, 7, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰³ Letter, W.E.B DuBois to Thomas Wyatt Turner, January 6, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁴ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to W.E.B. DuBois, January 6, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

Although Turner eagerly wanted to write this article in order to tell his side of the story he had to prepare his statement for the upcoming executive committee meeting, which Turner despite Markoe's interference had convened. This meeting would ultimately decide the fate of his grassroots organization.

Shortly thereafter, Markoe provided the Associated Negro Press with an interview explaining Turner's expulsion from the organization. He stated that Turner was removed from the organization because of his opposition to the idea of interracial co-operation and the place of white clergy in the federation. He reminded people that the recent removal of Turner was not a question of clergy versus laity or an opposition to Negro leadership, but was in fact an issue of, "interracial versus racial" and "progress versus reaction."²⁰⁵ But this in fact was an untrue assertion because Turner had never shied away from interracial co-operation. He did, however, understand it differently than Markoe and LaFarge in that he did not approve of an interracial approach where whites were the leaders of a black movement. Instead he envisioned a movement, whether interracial or racial, that privileged black leadership and black self-determination.

On January 8, 1933 at the Holy Name Guild in Washington D.C, the executive committee of the FCC worked to end the feud between Markoe, LaFarge and Turner. However, Markoe and his northern supporters did not attend the meeting

²⁰⁵ "Priest Advises ANP when Federation Will Meet," *Afro American*, January 7, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

choosing instead to convene the executive committee in June.²⁰⁶ At the meeting, the Catholic Body voted to support the original head of the organization, Turner, but they allowed the organization to remain split into two factions, one led by LaFarge and Markoe and the other by Turner. They applauded Turner for fending off clergy control of the organization and for turning the other cheek when his detractors flung false accusations and harmful propaganda at him. Despite the committee's stance, factions within its upper echelons continued to oppose Turner. One in particular, a Mr. M.C Whitler, treasurer of the federation and a native of the defecting St. Louis group, withheld funds necessary to continue the organization's work. The committee sought court action against Whitler, forcing him to release the funds as Catholics nationally came out in support of Turner.²⁰⁷

Despite the spread of propaganda and false accusations against Turner he persisted in asserting the aims of the organization as decidedly black driven. Turner tried his hardest at this meeting in January to reveal and then dispel many of the rumors and accusations spread by LaFarge and Markoe. At the meeting, Turner told the committee that, "the distinctly racial aims of our organization have been guarded

²⁰⁶ Marilyn Wenzke Nickels, *Black Catholic Protest and the Federated Colored Catholics, 1917-1933: Three Perspectives on Racial Justice* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 99.

²⁰⁷ "Catholic Body Supports head of Organization," *Roosevelt*, undated, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Catholic Federation Treasurers Threatened with Court Action," *Afro-American*, undated, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

zealously and set forth unmistakably in every revision of the constitution.”²⁰⁸ He told the committee of the threats made by LaFarge to leave the organization if the change in name and direction did not occur, and he alerted the committee of the recent slanderous article released by Markoe in *Interracial Review* entitled, “The Jim Crow Federation.” Markoe’s article insisted that the Federation was a separatist organization that privileged the involvement of black Catholics over that of white clergy and laymen. Turner pled with the executive committee, stating that he only sought to extricate his “organization with its aims and purposes untarnished by adventurous schemers or blind time-workers.”²⁰⁹ Two weeks later, Turner responded to Markoe’s accusations in the Baltimore *Afro American*. Turner declared that he was still the head of the Catholic federation despite what Markoe had claimed in his *Interracial Review*. Turner affirmed that he was not opposed to interracial cooperation, and asserted that it was ludicrous to believe that his organization perpetuated racial discrimination especially since he had spent his entire life fighting to rid the Church of this awful plague. Finally, he proclaimed that *Interracial Review* was not the official organ of the federation and that the convention in New York had not adopted an interracial platform, “whatever this vague term means.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Statement to Committee by Dr. Thomas W. Turner, President to National Promotion of Better Race Relations Meeting of the Executive Committee, January 8, 1933, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-2; “Action taken by the Executive Committee of the National Catholic Federation for the Promotion of Better Race Relations,” January 8, 1933, 1-3, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁰ “Dr. Turner Says he Still Heads Catholic Federation,” *Afro-American*, January 21, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives,

In this period, Turner used the African American press as a sounding board for the infighting-taking place in his organization. His focus on disseminating corrective articles in this period attests to his desire to garner support among both northern and southern black Catholic contingencies. In a February editorial in *Afro American*, Turner denounced the idea that the struggle between him, LaFarge and Markoe was a battle over a racial versus interracial organization. Instead he stated that,

It is provably false to try to make the public believe that the questions and issues are a difference between some racial and interracial idea, I would not carry on any such foolish controversy with the Reverend. Such jargon of words is only camouflage and had nothing immediately to do with the Rev. Father Markoe's attack upon the organization.

Turner rebuked Markoe's efforts to silence black Catholic protest by using the argument of reverse racism. He spoke of Markoe's hypocrisies in the editorial, bringing them to light in the most articulate of manners. He suggested that if Markoe was so interested in bi-racial work he should remove himself from the federation and become a missionary to his own religious group, the Jesuits. Turner found it inconceivable to think that any person with a, "deep burning of zeal for the welfare of

Washington, D.C.; "Catholic Cardinal and Bishops Asked to Erase all Color Lines," *Afro-American*, Jan. 21, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to William A. Prater, January 24, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Ohio Archbishop Congratulates Catholic Head," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 28, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

the Negro Catholics,” could at the same time look on, “in silence upon the intolerable practices going on before his own eyes and in his own community.”²¹¹

Over time, certain federation members began to pull away from the organization all together. Curley had been aware of the controversy within the organization, for Josephite Fr. Gillard had kept him apprised of the situation. Archbishop Curley detested the public struggle between Turner, Markoe and LaFarge in the press. In a letter to Turner, Curley demanded Turner leave him out of it altogether.²¹² Two days later Turner responded to Curley’s letter assuring him that he would not involve him in the mêlée. When Curley simultaneously received LaFarge’s invitation to the mid-western groups’ convention held in Cleveland that year, and Turner’s letter asserting his control of the federation, Curley had reached a breaking point. The archbishop stated that, “The parties who went to the fray, will have to fight it out, so far as I am concerned.”²¹³ Despite Curley’s dismay with Markoe, LaFarge and Turner’s public in-fighting, Turner published another article in an attempt to dispel the notion that the federation’s troubles had to do with whether or not the organization should assume a primarily interracial approach. Turner asserted,

²¹¹ Thomas Wyatt Turner, "Editorial from The Afro-American," February 4, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹² Letter, Michael Curley to Thomas Wyatt Turner, February 4, 1933, 1-2, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹³ John LaFarge, “The Catholic Negroes Take Stock,” *America*, February 4, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Michael Curley to Thomas Wyatt Turner, March 30, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

We have always welcomed such members of the white-group as desired to work with us, giving them important elective positions. This fact alone should qualify any persons, who seek to give the impression that our organization had not in the past encouraged fullest cooperation with the white group as leading candidate for the Ananias Club.

Turner continued, “the sole reason for the present disturbance is the inordinate desire of the good priest to put a stop to our progressive activity because he, himself, was afraid or otherwise hesitant in going through the whole program.”²¹⁴ By this point, the controversy between Markoe, LaFarge and Turner had indeed become personal in nature.²¹⁵

In March of that year, Turner finally submitted an editorial on the Federation for the Promotion of Better Race Relations for the March issue of the *Crisis*. He relayed to DuBois that he was, “very gratified that the entire eastern group of Negro Catholics, with the exception of a few Lafarge-controlled individuals in New York, have been very loyal to the principles of the organization and have not been in any way intimidated by the violent outbursts of the two Jesuit Priests.” Turner continued that, “it has been interesting further to find a man like the Reverend John LaFarge, who had not hesitated to get up in certain readings and use the expression “we

²¹⁴ Press Release, Thomas Turner, “The Catholic Federation Controversy Not a Question of Racial or Interracial Ideas,” February 4, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁵ Letter, Thomas Turner to Michael Curley, February 6, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Cora Grace Inman, “Open Letter to Catholics,” *Afro-American*, February 25, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

colored people,” then immediately and with violence repudiate all that this means when he thinks that his principle of white domination is at stake.”²¹⁶

The battle in the press continued between Markoe and Turner. His justifications to Curley also continued in this period, as Turner believed that blame for escalating the controversy in the press fell on Markoe and his supporters. Ultimately fed up, Curley excused himself from both groups.²¹⁷ As a result of this lack of hierarchical support, Turner submitted his resignation to the executive committee on April 4, 1933 of that year. He stated that his reason for leaving the federation was a longing to end the dissension in the group, which made the aims of the Federation impossible. Turner exclaimed that although the group would have to undergo a period of experimentation, he declared that this should not, “dampen our zeal nor cool our ardor to carry on for we have only scratched the ground in this great struggle to have the Negro see the Church in its fullness.”²¹⁸ All of Turner’s original supporters also submitted their resignations in an effort to make a point to Conrad’s group. They wanted to impress upon Conrad that their exit and the turning over of the original constitution and the papers of incorporation meant that Conrad’s group would be the start of a new organization. Turner’s supporters were unhappy about his

²¹⁶ Staff Correspondent, “Dr. Turner Take Issue Again with Claims of Father Markoe about Catholic Federation,” April 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to W.E.B. DuBois, March 3, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁷ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Eugene Clark, March 14, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁸ Letter, Thomas Wyatt Turner to Executive Committee, April 4, 1933, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

resignation, but Turner reaffirmed that his departure from the federation did not mean that he would cease his racial justice work on behalf of blacks. Response to his resignation was so intense that by June of that year Turner assumed his role as president once again.

In August of 1933, under the direction of Turner, the National Catholic Federation for the Promotion of Better Race Relations held a convention in Washington D.C.. This meeting was in fact reminiscent of the organization's earlier 1925 meetings. Meanwhile, in September of that year, Cleveland hosted the convention of the National Catholic Interracial Federation. After the convention, LaFarge became less involved in the group's executive committee meetings although he did continue to publish articles in *Interracial Review*. The Cardinal Gibbons Institute continued to suffer financially due in part to the lack of attention given it by LaFarge. The school's financial troubles forced LaFarge to turn his attention to saving the school from October through November. Unfortunately, he failed and in December of that year, the school officially closed its doors. While he faced defeat in terms of the school's closure, he did succeed in creating the Northeastern Clergy Conference on Negro Welfare, which would be one of several Catholic organizations featuring an interracial program.²¹⁹ As a result of financial difficulties at the end of that year, Markoe transferred ownership of his *Interracial Review* to LaFarge.

²¹⁹ John LaFarge, *The Manner is Ordinary* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1954), 339-340.

The following year in January, the events of Turner's convention were printed in *Voice*. This journal became the new official organ of the federation and was the first magazine in the country edited and published by black Catholic laymen. Black Catholics loyal to the original organization felt now more than ever that the, "most effective weapon of combating the aforementioned evils is public opinion, its chief instrument the press." Exposure in the press meant as much to the organization during the time of *St. Elizabeth's Chronicle* as it would in the period of *Voice* as it allowed the group to participate in the broader struggle for black equality. At the end of the February issue of *Voice*, editor Helen Pinkett pled with black Catholics to support the anti-lynching bill by supporting *Voice*. She concluded that, "if you want more Negro priests, if you want Negro boys and girls to receive their higher education in Catholic institutions, if when the story of the fight against lynching is recorded in history you want the names of Negro Catholics included," then support *Voice*. For the first time black Catholics had a press that they controlled and by extension the *Voice* became a space where they could communicate their own plan for black uplift.²²⁰

Markoe did not hold a convention that year as a consequence of his reappointment as pastor of his old church in St. Louis. Although the National Catholic Interracial Federation did not suspend its activity, Markoe's involvement with the federation lessened in succeeding years. LaFarge, meanwhile, became

²²⁰ *The Voice*, ed. Helen L. Pinkett, February 1935, March-April 1935, February 1937, March 1937, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

increasingly focused on his group the Catholic Laymen's Union. The Union had a concrete program for interracial action where black businessmen and professionals gave interracial conferences on what blacks needed for economic and social uplift. The New York based group focused its efforts almost exclusively in the New York City. LaFarge now oversaw a group that espoused his interracial program. In May of that year, LaFarge established the Catholic Interracial Council of New York and *Interracial Review* became the official organ of the group.²²¹ Later that year, Turner stepped down from the presidency once again, not by force, but as a result of his deteriorating health. G.A. Henderson and Eugene Clark were named honorary presidents in Turner's place. The group chose to restore its original name, reverting back to the Federated Colored Catholics.²²²

LaFarge published his canonical work on interracial justice in 1937. The Pope, impressed by LaFarge's work, asked the priest to write an encyclical on racism in the Catholic Church based on his ideas discussed in *Interracial Justice*. In his text he approached the topic of race prejudice in the church from a moral standpoint rather than from a political position. LaFarge defined Catholic interracial action as, "the effecting of interracial justice in the widest sense of the word." He asserted that the

²²¹ John LaFarge, *Interracial Justice* (New York: America Press, 1937), 172-187; John LaFarge, "What is Interracial?" *Interracial Review* (March 1933): 54.

²²² Letter, W.B. Bruce, President, M. Bruce, Secretary, and F.T. Broadus, Chairman of Dinner Committee to Foster, 1952, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

objective of Catholic interracial action was two-fold, first “the combating of social justice,” and second “the establishment of social justice.”²²³

In his canonical text, the LaFarge outlined methods for a Catholic interracial program and the avenues by which to achieve that program. He declared that prayer, example, and direct activity were the main provisions of a Catholic interracial program. One must first pray that the sentiment of interracial justice will spread to the masses; second, Catholics who support an interracial program must actively participate in said program, thus leading by example; third, direct activity which encompassed educating the masses on the precepts of interracial justice and what LaFarge termed constructive action, would ultimately result in the “attainment of social justice for the Negro.” LaFarge concluded that, “the interracial program, whether it be in the field of example and prayer, or education, or constructive action, is best promoted by small groups of conscientious, educated, and intelligent Catholics of both races working together methodically and continually under constant spiritual direction.” This was not to say that white Catholics, particularly those who were sympathetic to the plight of blacks, were completely on board with LaFarge’s plan. In fact, most white Catholics believed his program of interracial activity would inevitably lead to interracial marriages despite the fact that LaFarge had made explicit his non-support of interracial marriage in his book. LaFarge’s non-support of interracial marriage was not a result of beliefs concerning biological inferiority

²²³ John LaFarge, *Interracial Justice* (New York: America Press, 1937), 172-187.

among blacks, but was instead, a question of the external pressure that those outside of the marriage would place on the union.²²⁴

National and local acceptance of Catholic interracialism followed John LaFarge's *Interracial Justice* which provided the first theological guidance on the question of Catholic interracialism. The controversy that had taken place in the FCC from 1932-1933 had by this time left the organization limited in scope. The racial particularity of the Federated Colored Catholics' mission, allowed both liberal and moderate Catholics in the 1930s justification for suppressing what was becoming a national black Catholic movement. Scholar of religion and race, Albert Raboteau argues that although the Church in the early-mid twentieth century, espoused and envisioned universalism as a way to end racial strife, they had not yet accepted the kind of racial particularity exhibited by the FCC. Social justice in the church on behalf of African Americans changed in this period from the proclivity toward a national black movement towards a program of regional interracial organizing.²²⁵

In 1938, the Federated Colored Catholics called for the formation of a National Negro Congress. In doing so, Eugene Clark, now acting president of the FCC, hoped to bring the pieces of the organization back together, but unfortunately it was too late. A tide of Catholic social action had already become firmly rooted in a

²²⁴ Ibid., 137-148; "U.S. Catholics Urged by Pope to Work for Negroes," January 2, 1937, *Thomas Wyatt Turner Collection, 1877-1978*, Howard University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²²⁵ Albert J. Raboteau, "Relating Race and Religion: Four Historical Models," in *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholics Experience*, eds. M. Shawn Copeland, LaReine-Marie Mosely, S.N.D., and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 9.

program of Catholic interracial justice. In the years that followed, LaFarge's work set the stage for the emergence of several Catholic interracial organizations, regional in nature, and at this time located predominantly in the North. The South remained largely ignored until 1939 when Paul D Williams, a young Catholic layman from Virginia, proposed the creation of an interracial organization of Southern Catholics. In New Orleans, the number of segregated parishes increased as economic conditions in the region grew worse as a result of the Great Depression. Younger and more radical Jesuit interracialists appeared in the 1940s and in effect began criticizing the compromises older liberals had made.²²⁶ This increasing, "breed of Catholic social activists," emphasized the problem of the color-line and focused their attention on the Josephites. They joined the FCC in their critiques of the Josephite segregated parishes and the order's lack of black priests. Charles Rousseve, a master's student at Xavier University wrote his thesis on the accomplishments of black Louisianans and had nothing but good things to say about the Josephites. Historian, John Alberts notes that, "by the late 1930s, it was clear that some Josephite priests, although forbidden by their superior general to join civil rights groups, openly shared and nurtured the discontent of their black students and parishioners."²²⁷

The fall of the Federated Colored Catholics in the early twentieth century left black Catholics without a national or local voice in the struggle for civil rights.

²²⁶ David W. Southern, "But think of the Kids: Catholic Interracialism and the Great American Taboo of Race Mixing," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 16, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 70.

²²⁷ John B. Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era," *U.S. Catholics Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter, 1994): 96.

Catholic interracial organizing became the main method of confronting racism and segregation in the Catholic Church from the 1940s-1960s. The same issues that plagued the Catholic interracial movement in the early twentieth century—a lack of black representation in the Church, a majority white Catholic leadership and a devaluing of black self-determination would ultimately stall the Church’s move toward full black inclusion into the 1960s. An examination of the limitations and possibilities of Catholic interracial organizing must consider the early repression of the FCC and the impact this silencing had on the struggle for black Catholic inclusion at the local level decades later. Using New Orleans as a case study that exemplifies the rapid development of Catholic interracial organizing as means of confronting racial discrimination in the Catholic Church, the next chapter will first, explore the rise of Catholic interracial organizations in New Orleans from the 1940s to the 1960s. It will then examine the attempts of Catholic interracialists to desegregate the city’s parochial schools during the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, it will examine the call for black self-determination in the Church and the black Catholic response to the few gains achieved through Catholic interracial organizing.

Chapter 2

Catholic Interracial Organizing and the Desegregation of New Orleans

Parochial Schools, 1950-1965

During the mid-twentieth century, the Catholic Church's program of interracial justice failed to bring about a truly universal age in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and its schools. Adopted by Catholic officials in New Orleans, Catholic interracialism was in essence a product of white liberal Jesuit John LaFarge's theological ruminations, which downplayed black self-determination and placed emphasis on white-led interracial cooperation. Prior to the convening of the Vatican II (1962-1965), the Catholic Church and its predominantly white clerical leadership, paid little attention to the history and culture of their black parishioners. Thus, the church's universalism was, in practice, limited in dioceses across the United States. Nationally, white Catholic officials tended to reduce black inequity to economics or psychological factors, arguing that racism played no role in the disparity between the races; racism was considered to be an individual affliction rather than a systemic problem.²²⁸

Father John LaFarge was forward thinking for the early 20th century, yet he was, in the words of scholar Jon Nilson, "unable to understand why blacks had to appropriate their own history, secure their own identity, and find their own voice

²²⁸Jon Nilson, *Hearing Past the Pain: Why White Catholic Theologians Need Black Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 30.

before integration could mean genuine harmony.”²²⁹ What the church and the Catholic interracial movement had failed to grasp prior to mid-late 20th century, but that Thomas Wyatt Turner had understood in the early-twentieth century was that, “without the recognition of cultural, racial, and ethnic particularity,” there could be, “no true universalism.”²³⁰

The desegregation of parochial schools in New Orleans in 1950s and 1960s occurred in three distinct phases, which were buttressed by the release of three pastoral letters by Archbishop Joseph Rummel. These all endorsed Catholic interracialism as the method by which desegregation of Catholic facilities would occur. Diverging from works that glorify the development of Catholic interracialism as a natural progression of Catholic racial organizing, I argue that the Catholic interracial movement in New Orleans fell short on a number of fronts in their bid to integrate parochial schools in the 1960s. The church’s reductionist views of racial particularity, their adherence to racist social customs, and the neglect of black history

²²⁹ Ibid., 32.

²³⁰ Albert J. Raboteau, “Relating Race and Religion: Four Historical Models,” in *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholics Experience*, eds. M. Shawn Copeland, LaReine-Marie Mosely, and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 17; Gary B. Agee, *Daniel Rudd and His Life in Black Catholicism, Journalism, 1854-1933* (Fayetteville, The University of Arkansas Press, 2011); Cecilia A. Moore, “Black Catholic Clergy and the Struggle for Civil Rights: Winds of Change,” in *Uncommon Faithfulness: the Black Catholic Experience* eds. M. Shawn Copeland, LaReine-Marie Mosely, and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 78-97.

and culture in the material pertaining to Catholic interracialism resulted in a dearth of black Catholic voices and the alienation of black Catholics in the movement.²³¹

Catholic interracial organizations in New Orleans had few black members and were relatively ineffective in the twentieth century.²³² White intransigence to the interracial nature of these organizations rendered them ineffectual, and eventually ended in their demise. Also, the Catholic hierarchy's belief that racism was an individual problem, rather than an institutional one, led the Catholic interracial movement in New Orleans to fix its attention on reeducating racist white Catholics through literature and forced interracial activity; however, in doing so, the movement failed to consult black Catholics on the kinds of information created and disseminated. The *Brown* (1954) decision, the Civil Rights movement, and the convening of Second Vatican Council however, would complicate the delicate tension between racial particularity and universalism as black Catholics carved out a place in the church for themselves. While interracial councils in New Orleans prior to Vatican II were commendable in their strivings for racial equality, black Catholic yearnings for autonomy and racial distinctiveness culminated in an increase of black Catholic organizations by the late 1960s. Black Catholics remained loyal to their church throughout the early to the mid-1960s in spite of the limits of Catholic interracial doctrine and the slow pace of Catholic desegregation. They carried on their

²³¹ Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 4.

²³² Jon Nilson, *Hearing Past the Pain: Why White Catholic Theologians Need Black Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 32.

own Catholic crusade against racism in the church as they and their allies began the arduous task of “erasing the color line.”²³³ The limitations of interracial organizing in the mid-twentieth century, and the subsequent increase in black run organizations in the late 1960s affirmed that only when blacks were allowed to exert control over the narrative of racial equality and the program of Catholic social action could the Catholic program of interracialism be successful.²³⁴

During the late 1930s, the Great Depression economically devastated the South. After reading a National Security Council report on the problems of the South, President Franklin Roosevelt declared the region the number one economic problem in the U.S. President Roosevelt denounced the overwhelming misuse of economic potential, low literacy rates, and poverty that were characteristic of the Depression-era South.²³⁵ In response to Roosevelt’s assertion, Southern reformists, both religious and secular, began forming social organizations dedicated to economic and social reform. The first group to emerge was the secular interracial Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). Some of the most notable attendees of the first SCHW conference were Aubrey Williams of the Works Progress Administration (WPA),

²³³ Albert J. Raboteau, “Relating Race and Religion: Four Historical Models,” in *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholics Experience*, eds. M. Shawn Copeland, LaReine-Marie Mosely, and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 17.

²³⁴ R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1996).

²³⁵ Katherine Martensen, “Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956,” *Catholic Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (1982): 251.

white activist Virginia Foster Durr, and black activist Mary McLeod Bethune. They held their first meeting in Birmingham in 1938, Alabama, much to the dismay of segregationists in the city. Early on, the SCHW attempted to present a national front by inviting radicals and all others interested in responding to the economic problems of the region.²³⁶ The SCHW hosted a number of conferences but made little progress in improving conditions in the region, in part, due to their affiliation with labor Marxists, and white resistance to the interracial nature of the organization. For example, on the second day of the conference, Birmingham Police Commissioner Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor interrupted the gathering to enforce segregated seating. Members reluctantly complied and Connor allowed the conference to continue. This particular incident prompted negative criticism of the conference in local newspapers and resulted in several prominent members leaving the organization.²³⁷

Paul D. Williams, a white layman from Richmond, VA, who had attended a number of these early conferences, believed that in order to confront the economic issue in the South, the program must be one that linked economic reform with moral principles.²³⁸ After securing a meeting with Father John A. Ryan and Father Raymond McGowan, members of the Social Action Department of the National

²³⁶ Ibid., 251-252.

²³⁷ Rebecca Woodham, "Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW)," The Encyclopedia of Alabama, July 7, 2008. <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1593> accessed on August 11, 2016; Thomas A. Krueger, *And Promises to Keep: The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 1938-1948* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967).

²³⁸ Letter, Paul D. Williams to Reverend Gerald O’Hara, May 3, 1939, Box 1, Folder 1, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), Williams proposed his plan for reform. The NCWC agreed with the young layman and requested he organize a Southern group to meet at the upcoming National Social Action Congress, scheduled for June 12-14, 1939 in Cleveland, OH. During the conference, Bishop Gerald O'Hara of Savannah, GA endorsed Williams' plan with the assertion, "You have heard President Roosevelt say the South is the country's No. 1 economic problem. Let me say to you that the South is the Church's No. 1 religious opportunity."²³⁹

The following year, Williams formed the Catholic Conference of the South and held their first annual meeting in Atlanta.²⁴⁰ Early membership in the group included clergy and laity, women and men, blacks and whites, Catholics and non-Catholics, and Southerners as well as Northerners.²⁴¹ The creation of the Catholic Conference of the South was a clear attempt at creating a truly egalitarian interracial organization. Much like the interracial organizations of LaFarge's period, the CCS's Board of Governors consisted of a set of bishops who exercised ultimate authority

²³⁹ Letter, Gerald O'Hara to Fulton J. Sheen, March 20, 1940, Box 1, Folder 2, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Gerald P. O'Hara to Paul D. Williams, April 5, 1940, Box 1, Folder 12, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *Catholic Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (1982): 251-252.

²⁴⁰ First Annual Meeting: Southern Catholic Conference for Social Action, April 14-16, 1940, Box 2, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁴¹ Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *Catholic Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (1982): 253; John B. Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans during the Jim Crow Era," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1, (1994): 96.

over the committee. The task of the committee would be to reconcile the social doctrine of the church with Catholic action. Catholic social doctrine advocated racial justice based on, “individual rights in the social order” in papal pronouncements, such as *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and *Divini Redemptoris* (1939). Their overall task in implementing action in keeping with social justice principles would be a difficult one, because the South was largely Protestant and anti-Catholic.

In the first year of the committee, Williams made sure that the CCS had representation at all of the Southern reform conferences; the Virginia Interracial Convention, the Conference of the Southeastern Cooperative Educational Association and the Southern Policy Committee. Despite having the support of the NCWC as well as the Vatican, the CCS did not have the full support of most Southern bishops. These dissenting bishops believed that the goals of NCWC and the CCS overlapped, therefore they did not see the importance of supporting the CCS when they already backed the NCWC.²⁴²

²⁴² Letter, Reverend H. Jos. Jacobi to Reverend Gerald P. O’Hara, June 10, 1940, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Paul D. Williams to Gerald P. O’Hara, June 10, 1940, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Paul D. Williams to Gerald P. O’Hara, August 30, 1940, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “A Declaration by the Southern Regional Conference Called by the Southern Policy Committee,” December 15, 1940. *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center; Letter, Archbishop Joseph Rummel to Reverend Gerald P. O’Hara, Box 1, Folder 5, December 31, 1940, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center.

By 1941, the Catholic Conference of the South had changed its name to the Catholic Committee of the South. Henry L. Cavarati became president, T. James McNamara became the Chairman of the Executive Board and Paul D. Williams took on the title of Executive Secretary of the CCS. CCS conventions held throughout the 1940s focused on the place of African Americans in southern society and issues of race and economics. In January of 1941, the CCS released a report that outlined the organization's program for economic and social reform. CCS officials emphasized that "the problems of the South are regional" and proposed their objectives in what they referred to as the "Nine Point Program."²⁴³ The CCS' Nine Point Program emphasized an increase in membership by way of Catholic education of those in Southern Catholic Churches as well as countrywide. Their plans included establishing social orders that complimented a "Christian family life" and promoting the training of both black and white leaders in an effort to, "bring the force of Christian teaching to labor and industry and their organization." The organization sought to, "bring about a friendlier understanding between Southerners irrespective of race and creed," and further insisted that this would all come about if the Church's flock and those outside of it understood that, "Christian Principle is basic to the American conception of citizenship and government."²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Catholic Conference of the South, "A Report on the Catholic Conference of the South," January 1941, 1, Box 2, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

Although the CCS arbitrated labor disputes and led voter registration drives in Natchez Mississippi, most of their activity took place in New Orleans, which had the largest Catholic population in the South, and the largest number of missions dedicated to the care of African Americans.²⁴⁵ In January of that year, Williams wrote to several bishops about the CCS's program for social justice. Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel was one of several bishops who took an early interest in the organization. Archbishop Rummel was born in 1876 in Baden, Germany, where he resided until the age of six. By seven, his parents had immigrated to the United States and settled in the northeastern states of New York and Pennsylvania from 1882-1902. Rummel finished his seminary education in Rome and was ordained in May of 1902. Over the next twenty-five years he served as a parish priest in a number of the city parishes in New York. Following his tenure in New York, he spent seven years in Omaha as a bishop. He then succeeded John W. Shaw as Archbishop of New Orleans on March 9, 1935 and dedicated himself to expanding the parochial school system in the city. Archbishop Rummel's expertise in church administration was reflected in his establishment of new lay groups, most of which were interracial in nature, and in his reorganization of diocesan accounting procedures, which allowed the Church to recover financially in the wake of the Great Depression.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ John Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States: An Investigation of Catholic Activity in Behalf of the Negroes in the United States and a Survey of the Present Condition of the Colored Missions* (Baltimore: The Josephite Press, 1941), 136-137.

²⁴⁶ Philip A. Grant Jr., "Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel and the 1962 New Orleans Desegregation Crisis," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 91, no. 1/4 (1980): 59-66.

Williams recognized Rummel's liberal position on social justice in the South and thought that Rummel would be willing to persuade bishops who opposed the CCS's work to support the organization's reform program. In his letter to Rummel, Williams expressed his fear that there were bishops in the Conference of Southern Bishops who saw no need for the CCS and who sought to undermine the organization.²⁴⁷ In a January letter to Williams, Rummel reassured him, "There is no disposition to suppress the Catholic Conference of the South." He went on to explain that, "the concern seems to be to define its scope and coordinate it with other movements sponsored by the NCWC."²⁴⁸

In April of that year, the CCS held their second annual convention in Birmingham, AL. Rummel served as Episcopal Chairman of Labor and Industry in the National Defense wing of the CCS, and Charles E. Logan, also of New Orleans, served as Rummel's Chairman. At the meeting they discussed the Nine-Point Plan. The CCS understood that their main provisions would take some time to implement, so they also proposed an objective that would be immediate: the training of future leaders, both black and white.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Letter, Paul D. Williams to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, January 21, 1941, Box 1, Folder 6, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁴⁸ Letter, Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel to Paul D. Williams, January 25, 1941, Box 1, Folder 6, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁴⁹ Program Second Annual Convention of the Catholic Committee of the South, April 20-22, 1941, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Catholic Committee of the South, "General Principles According to Which the Branches of the Summer Session of the Catholic University were Established," July 24, 1941, 1-2, Box 1, Folder 10, *Catholic*

In 1941, the CCS's Department of Education conducted a study on the education of Catholic schoolteachers in the South. Their report conveyed cogent arguments for better teacher education and training. Along with Rummel, three liberal priests, Reverend Wm. H. Rientjes, Reverend Wm. J. Castel, and Reverend Wm. J. Bourke, as well as two laymen, John X. Wegman and Charles Denchaud, represented New Orleans at the October executive meeting of the CCS. The members proposed the creation of a summer teacher training school, located in Memphis, TN, which would educate qualified teachers for parochial schools in the South.²⁵⁰ The Catholic University of America would provide teachers for the program because there were few in the South who supported the plan for black education.²⁵¹

The following year, the CCS began to organize its third annual convention scheduled for April in Richmond, VA. They also continued to garner support for their proposed summer school, which they planned to open in the summer of 1942.²⁵² By

Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁵⁰ Catholic Conference of the South, "Meeting of the Department of Education of the Catholic Committee of the South," October 8, 1941, 1-4, Box 2, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁵¹ Catholic Committee of the South, "Minutes of Meeting of Officers, Members of the Executive Committee and Department Heads of the Catholic Committee of the South, September 9-10, 1941, 14, Box 2, Folder 17, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Geoffrey O'Connell to Gerald P. O'Hara, December 24, 1941, 1-4, Box 1, Folder 10, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; "An Agreement Between the Siena College and the Catholic University of America," December 24, 1941, 1, Box 1, Folder 10, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁵² Letter, Gerald P. O'Hara to Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel, December 30, 1941, Box 1, Folder 10, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad

January 1942, the CCS had five firmly established sub-committees, each with its own chairman and vice chairman: Rural Life, Labor and Industry, Racial Relations, Youth and Education, as well as a board of officers, an executive board, and a board of layman.²⁵³

During this time, the Catholic Church was buffeted by cultural, political, and economic winds. No institution remained untouched by accusations of communist ties, including the Catholic Church. The CCS had always been anti-Communist, beginning with Paul D. Williams' suspicions of communist members in the SCHW. While Williams actively sought affiliation with all Southern reform organizations, he was always careful to avoid aligning himself with any organization suspected of

Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Memorandum, Paul D. Williams to The Executive Board and the Diocesan Units of the CCS, "Suggested Diocesan Programs," December 31, 1941, 1-2, Box 1, Folder 10, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Bishop Gerald P. O'Hara to Henry Wallace, January 24, 1942, Box 1, Folder 11, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Bishop Gerald P. O'Hara to Dr. Roy J. Deferrari, January 24, 1942, Box 1, Folder 11, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Bishop Gerald P. O'Hara to Rev. P.J. McCormick, January 24, 1942, Box 1, Folder 11, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, H.A. Wallace to Rev. Gerald P. O'Hara, January 30, 1942, Box 1, Folder 11, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁵³ "Catholic Committee of the South Officers," January 1942. *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Bishop Gerald P. O'Hara to H.A. Wallace, February 10, 1942, Box 1, Folder 12, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, W.J. O'Neill to The Catholic Committee of the South, April 25, 1942, Box 1, Folder 12, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

having communist ties. Yet, Archbishop Rummel held his own suspicions of the SCHW's possible communist ties. Rummel requested the CCS attend an upcoming meeting of SCHW in order to determine the extent of their affiliation with the Communist Party and its professed members. Williams suggested Reverend John F. Cronin, Assistant Director of the Department of Social Action for the NCWC, attend the upcoming SCHW meeting in Nashville to investigate his concerns. Following the meeting, Cronin wrote Rummel with assurances that the SCHW was "not dominated by Communists although they are striving vigorously to determine its policies."²⁵⁴ By 1942, the CCS faced financial crisis because their financial support rested solely on the shoulders of willing Southern bishops.²⁵⁵

At the organization's executive board meeting in October, members of the Archdiocese of New Orleans reported on the activity of their local CCS committee, which consisted of three priests, three laymen, and three laywomen. Not all Southern dioceses in attendance had good news to report concerning the creation of a CCS

²⁵⁴ Letter, Rev. John F. Cronin to Archbishop Rummel, May 1, 1942, 1-3, Box 1, Folder 13, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Paul D. Williams to Reverend John M. Hayes, June 13, 1942, Box 1, Folder 15, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Paul D. Williams to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, June 20, 1942, Box 1, Folder 15, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁵⁵ Letter, Rev. Gerald P. O'Hara to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, July 9, 1942, Box 1, Folder 16, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Paul D. Williams to Reverend Lucien Lauerman, July 18, 1942, Box 1, Folder 17, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Rev. Gerald P. O'Hara to Archbishop Rummel, August 14, 1942, Box 1, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

chapter in their cities. For instance, while the Natchez, Savannah-Atlanta, Richmond, and Little Rock dioceses had successfully established diocesan chapters, Nashville, Alexandria, Charleston, and Abbey Nullius had failed to erect a CCS chapter. Abbey Nullius had too few Catholics to be a viable organization; Charleston and Nashville had yet to create chapters but noted that it would be done in the future. The diocese of Alexandria, on the other hand, reported that some of their priests, “who apparently have not grasped the meaning of the CCS, have given it the cold shoulder.”²⁵⁶

From 1943 to 1945, the war took a toll on the finances of the CCS, which found it necessary to bring to a halt all regional activity; nevertheless, the organization continued to function. At their fourth convention in 1943 in Biloxi, MS, CCS members admitted that the organization needed to think critically about other avenues of financial support besides bishop donations. Members proposed several programs for alleviating the financial weight placed on bishops. Unfortunately, by the close of the convention, members were unable to reach an agreement on the matter. The CCS elected not to hold a convention in 1945 due to the impending war, but they did resume their conventions in 1946 in New Orleans, LA.

Throughout the war, the CCS continued to develop its strategies and organizational structure. However, by the final years of World War II, the committee had accomplished very little in the way of lasting social and economic reform. The one accomplishment the organization could point to was the establishment of the CCS

²⁵⁶ Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting of the Catholic Committee of the South, Atlanta, Georgia, October 27, 1942, 5-6, Box 2, Folder 17, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

summer school. From 1947-1953, the CCS held four more conventions, which occurred in Charlotte, Lexington, Columbia, and Richmond. Ultimately, the fear of the spread of communism, hostility toward organized labor, continued financial difficulties and the emergence of the black led civil rights movement resulted in the decline of the organization.²⁵⁷

The emergence of the SCHW and the CCS represented an unrealized possibility of progressive interracialism activism in the 1930s and 1940s. Both interracial organizations advocated a gradual move toward racial equality that became an extension of the arguments made by John LaFarge in the early 1930s. Although the SCHW and the CCS held gatherings in which black attendees had the space to publicly voice their concerns and ideas about how best to agitate for racial equality, the intransigence of whites to the interracial nature of the organizations made the groups especially vulnerable to attack.²⁵⁸ Similarly, interracialism could not succeed in this period because the strategy of diminishing the importance of black autonomy and voice caused white leaders of these interracial organizations to lose sight of black concerns.²⁵⁹ Although the road would be a difficult one, the obstacles placed before the CCS did not stop the organization from broadening its agenda to include a critical focus on race.

²⁵⁷ Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *Catholic Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (1982): 253.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 249-267.

²⁵⁹ Rachel L. Emanuel and Alexander P. Tureaud, *A More Noble Cause: A.P. Tureaud and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 212.

At the Lexington convention in May of 1949, members who attended the CCS race relations workshop proposed an end to segregation in both public and parochial schools as well as for the admission of black students to hospitals and professional and graduate schools. They founded their assertion on the 1949 Synod of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, which decreed explicitly that, “Negroes must worship in whatever church they please and must not be asked to sit in specifically designated pews.”²⁶⁰ Members in the subcommittee reaffirmed their commitment to interracial organizing and called for the establishment of more interracial councils.²⁶¹

New Orleans, which now housed the CCS’s main headquarters, continued to be the site of a majority of the organization’s interracial activity. In 1949, Father Joseph Fitcher S.J. established the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), which became the archdiocesan unit of the New Orleans CCS. The organization’s emergence exemplified the growth of the interracial movement in the city. The organization consisted of an interracial cadre of lay Catholics from New Orleans, all committed to racial equality in the church. The committee had on average approximately 100 members a year.²⁶² In its emphasis on Catholic reeducation,

²⁶⁰ “Commission on Human Rights of the Catholic Committee of the South: Its Principles, Objectives and Achievements,” New Orleans, Louisiana [1949-1951], Box 2, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁶¹ “Catholics Fight Segregation,” *Courier Journal*, May 13, 1949, 1, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁶² Catholic Committee of the South, Publicity Section, New Orleans, 1948, Box 2, Folder 22, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

members of the CHR visited white and black churches, worshipped, and took the sacraments together in an effort to outwardly display the practice of Catholic interracialism and universal worship to those who were opposed to racial integration. They were usually well received at black Catholic churches, for at this time, black Catholics in New Orleans saw their fate tied to the success of the Catholic interracial movement. White Catholic churches, on the other hand, usually rebuffed the group's attempts.²⁶³

Unfortunately, those in the group did not understand the extent to which white Catholic resistance, both lay and clerical, would stifle their attempts. Patricia Ryan, lead secretary for the organization, spoke on the difficulties her group faced in speaking to white Catholics. She stated their efforts were hampered by the absence of a "general willingness on the part of so many white Catholics in New Orleans to hear what we have to say."²⁶⁴ During this period, the rest of the Catholic Church conformed to the racial dictates of the Deep South. With that context in mind, there is little doubt that members of the CHR, in their unyielding desire to embody the moral

²⁶³ Rachel L. Emanuel and Alexander P. Tureaud, *A More Noble Cause: A.P. Tureaud and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 213; R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White and Catholic* (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), xiv-15.

²⁶⁴ Letter, Joseph H. Fichter to Msgr. Charles J. Plauche, Chancellor of Archdiocese of New Orleans, May 9, 1950, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA. The seven Churches mentioned in the letter include, Our Lady Star of the Sea, Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Anthony, St. Joseph, St. Mary of the Angels, St. Maurice and St. Patrick. For more on Joseph H. Fichter please consult, Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *The Changing Parish: A Study of Parishes, and Parishioners After Vatican II* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

precepts of universal worship, were risking their lives entering hostile white Catholic churches and high school and college classrooms to organize.

Interracial congregations continued to exist, although by this time there was already a large number of separate black parishes in New Orleans. There were areas of the city where blacks could and did attend any Catholic church of their choosing, which was a result of black Catholic resistance to segregation in their churches from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Once in the Church, however, they were often segregated from their white Catholic peers. Creole newspaper founder C.C. Dejoie wrote of the injustices that black Catholics faced on a daily basis in the interracial churches in the city. Dejoie condemned the persistence of racial discrimination in the Catholic church stating, “While Negroes still attend churches designated for whites, they must do so on a segregated basis. Some churches even maintain signs indicating where colored members are expected to sit. A revolting practice in the House of God.”²⁶⁵

In 1951, O’Hara replaced Rummel as Episcopal chairman of the CCS, but Rummel maintained formal ties to the committee. John LaFarge, pioneer of the Catholic interracial movement, admired Archbishop Rummel’s early efforts toward black Catholic inclusion and applauded his command over a diocese with the largest

²⁶⁵ “The Seventh Synod of the New Orleans Archdiocese,” June 28th, 1949. Synod: An assembly of clergy and sometimes also the laity in a diocese or other division of a particular church; “Tan Catholics Advised Not to Visit Holy City,” *Afro-American*, February 11, 1950, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA; “Is Official Policy Official Practice?” *The Louisiana Weekly*, April 1, 1950, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

black Catholic population in the US. By 1950, the New Orleans diocese had 62,000 black Catholics, a population more than twice that of New York's 30,302, where LaFarge's Catholic Interracial Council of New York (CICNY) reigned.²⁶⁶ LaFarge also recognized that Archbishop Joseph Rummel had twice attempted to end racial segregation in churches throughout the archdiocese: once in 1950, in a set of stipulations produced by the archdiocesan synod, and again in 1951, with the release of a piece on the plight of "Indian and Negro Missions" in the city.²⁶⁷

On January 5, 1951, the CCS held its eleventh and most radical convention to date in Columbia, SC. John F. LaFarge had been invited, and at the convention on race relations, he "spoke on the development of interracial groups and the methods to be used in forming them." According to the workshop report, "140 to 210 people attended the workshop that day. Less than ten Negroes were observed, but four of those present spoke on one or more occasions." Members reiterated the CCS's 1949 assertion that immediate desegregation should occur in all parochial schools, churches, and church organizations. Fearing that the workshop would produce little more than a litany of solutions without methods of implementation, those

²⁶⁶ David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1996), 315.

²⁶⁷ Archbishop Francis Rummel to Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, "Collections Indian and Negro Mission," January 29, 1951, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA. Henriette Delille, a Free Woman of Color, founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1842. The order tended to the needs of the impoverished, enslaved and infirmed in the city from their establishment to the present. For more on the Sisters of the Holy Family please consult; Sister Mary Bernard Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans*, eds. Virginia Meacham Gould and Charles E. Nolan (Bloomington: Indianapolis University Press, 2001).

participating in the conference took great care to avoid, “broad general pronouncements,” and to make, “clear recommendations of specific forms of action.”²⁶⁸ First they sought to eliminate all racially divided diocesan organizations, including the immediate abolition of segregated pews. They also sought to “stimulate an interest in the formation of interracial groups in every deanery, where feasible, throughout the South and attendees formulated a plan for coordinating efforts with other civil rights groups.

On the heels of this convention, in 1951, Archbishop Joseph Rummel released his piece on the plight of “Indian and Negro Missions” in the city. His bold call for an end to racial desegregation in all churches within the archdiocese, was one of most progressive public assertions of the period.²⁶⁹ Rummel proclaimed, “the lines of segregation must disappear in our churches, not only physically but in the true spirit of Christian brotherhood.”²⁷⁰ He also contended the color line must vanish, “in the seating accommodation, at the confessional, at the Communion rail and in general in the reception of the Sacrament and sacramental of the Church.”²⁷¹ In the same breath he asked the Fathers of his diocese to pray for the success of the upcoming Interracial

²⁶⁸ Catholic Committee of the South, *The Catholic Committee of the South Department of Race Relations Convention Workshop Report* (New Orleans, 1951), 6-7, Box 2, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁶⁹ R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White and Catholic: Catholic Interracialism, 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008) 114.

²⁷⁰ Archbishop Joseph Rummel, “Collection Indian and Negro Mission,” January 29, 1951, 1-3. *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

Day to be observed by black and white Catholic college students on February 18 at the Holy Name of Jesus Auditorium. In this instance Archbishop Rummel reaffirmed his commitment to Catholic interracial organizing.

The February and March releases of the *Louisiana Weekly* conveyed the excitement of black Catholics at the possibility of desegregation in the Church, with titles exclaiming, “A Sense of Belonging,” “No Unity without End of Segregation” and “Archbishop Rummel Calls on Orleans to End Segregation in Catholic Church.”²⁷² The black newspaper revealed an early glimmer of hope for black Catholics, but ultimately black desires for desegregated churches did not come to fruition during this period.

Two years later black Catholics supported the convening of a Human Relations Commission whose job was to work for a, “better understanding and good will among the various ethnic, racial and religious groups of the community.”²⁷³

²⁷² “Archbishop Rummel Calls on Orleans to End Segregation in Catholic Church,” *Louisiana Weekly*, February 17, 1951, 1, 8, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “A Sense of ‘Belonging,’” *Louisiana Weekly*, February 24, 1951, 10, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “No Unity without End of Segregation,” *Louisiana Weekly*, March 3, 1951, 10, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁷³ “Plea for Human Relations Commission Solidly Backed: View Proposal as Sensible Idea to Charter Draft,” *Louisiana Weekly*, February 16, 1952, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA. Those who backed the Council hoped that the members of the Commission would come from the New Orleans Archdiocesan Unit of the Catholic Committee of the South, the New Orleans Central Trade Council, Chamber of Commerce, AFL, Jewish Federation of New Orleans, the Council of Churches, New Orleans Area Industrial Union Council, CIO and the New Orleans Urban League. Taken from *Louisiana Weekly*, “Plea for Human Relations Commission Solidly Backed: View Proposal as Sensible Idea to Charter Draft,” February 16, 1952.

Rummel wrote a forceful letter in support of the Commission. The *Louisiana Weekly* voiced their support for the Human Relations Commission as the date to add the amendment to the New City Charter bore down on the city. Stirring pleas from leading city officials poured in, one written by Dr. Raymond C. Witte exclaimed, “we now have a chance to methodically and scientifically show the nation that we can and will set our own house in order.”²⁷⁴ In the end though, much like the rest of the Deep South, New Orleans governor Robert Kennon, refused to implement a Human Relations Commission.²⁷⁵

From 1951 to 1952, the CCS hosted a sequence of institutes tasked with teaching priests about the political and social conditions in the city and methods of social action. The CCS also proposed and sponsored what they called “Think Groups” which appealed more to lay activists; these groups met regularly in a number of Louisiana parishes.²⁷⁶ The Columbia convention held in 1953 marked the peak of the CCS’ interracial activity in the city.²⁷⁷ The CHR, the diocesan unit of the CCS, published a March 1951 report on its second year of interracial activity in New

²⁷⁴ “Urgency of Human Relations Commission Cited to Council: Civic Groups Urge its Inclusion in New City Charter,” *Louisiana Weekly*, May 3, 1952, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁷⁵ “Southern Governors Refuse to Act on Human Relations Council,” *Louisiana Weekly*, August 22, 1952; R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005) xiii.

²⁷⁶ Katherine Martensen, “Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956,” *Catholic Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1982): 262.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 261.

Orleans and the rest of the region,²⁷⁸ however, white members still outnumbered black members 68 to 44.

The next convention held in Richmond, Virginia in April of 1953, was more subdued due to increasing fears concerning the spread of Communism. The executive board levied several restrictions on the format of the convention, which resulted in a tighter control over proposed action. Rather than allowing the membership to produce a set of resolutions at the close of the meeting, the CCS would now release a statement by Southern bishops assembled by the executive board and sanctioned by the board of governors. Departments within the CCS could only release workshop materials that documented ideas, techniques, and suggestions, and in all cases, they needed to convey to the public that those documents did not reflect CCS proclamations. The 1953 convention marked the final regional meeting of the CCS. Scattered across the Southern region of the US and cut off from the dialogic connections that had connected them, members of the group seemed to lose a collective sense of drive. A proclivity towards regionalism in the early years of the organization, the centralization of its conventions, and financial problems resulted in a decrease in membership CCS. Only a small but devoted number of participants remained active in the CCS after 1953.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Commission on Human Rights of the Catholic Committee of the South, *Report of Commission Activity* (New Orleans, 1951), 3, Box 2, Folder 20, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁷⁹ Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *Catholic Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (April, 1982): 263.

Following a 1953 interracial gathering, Rummel called for an end to segregation in the archdiocesan facilities with the release of the first of several pastoral letters. His time with the CCS and the CHR undoubtedly affected his early call for desegregation in the archdiocese. Rummel saw the pastoral pronouncements as a necessary component of Catholic interracial education. The letters conveyed Rummel's conviction of an intrinsic link between Catholic reeducation and the end of segregation in the archdiocese. In "Blessed are the Peacemakers," Rummel spoke of peace between all mankind. Although most of the pronouncement emphasized peace between nations and in society at large, it also emphasized the present concern of the Church, the segregation of black Catholics. The Archbishop proclaimed, "we have already made notable progress by the removal of offensive signs that limited the use of certain pews."²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, instances of discriminatory practices, such as forcing blacks to the back of the church in a designated colored section and to stand at the end of the line to receive Holy Communion, still existed in many areas of the archdiocese. At the close of his pastoral letter, Rummel stated, "let there be no further segregation or discrimination in the pews, at the communion rail, in confessional and in parish meetings."²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Joseph Rummel, "Blessed are the Peacemakers," *Pastoral Letter*, May 15, 1953, 4, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5; Jules A. Guste, "New Orleans Racial Progress in Catholic Spheres," *Notre Damean* 21, no. 4 (May 1954): 2, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

Early CCS calls for integration, and Rummel's eventual proposition of Catholic desegregation in New Orleans, likely influenced desegregation efforts in other Southern locales. For instance, on June 12, 1953, within a few months after Rummel's pastoral letter, Bishop Vincent S. Waters of Raleigh, an early participant in the CCS, eliminated all segregated churches and did away with all signage in the church that separated blacks and whites. On April 5, 1954, one month before the *Brown v. Board of Education Decision* (1954) that declared segregated schools unequal, Bishop Peter L. Ireton of Richmond, also an early participant of the CCS, followed suit, declaring a racially open policy in the city's Catholic schools.²⁸² Although these bishops' efforts toward early Catholic desegregation were laudable, other bishops across the South did not share the same resolve; this was unfortunate, because the power to end segregation rested solely in the hands of these opposing southern bishops. When the Supreme Court rendered the *Brown* verdict in May of 1954, the CCS publicly backed the ruling. Father Maurice Shean, the General Chairman of the CCS, released a statement in response to the *Brown* decision, in which he stated, "We felt that these efforts will speed the day when justice and charity will be developed in the light of our faith and democratic principles of our country."²⁸³

²⁸² Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *Catholic Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1982): 264.

²⁸³ "Sweeping Effects on All Southern Catholics Foreseen," *Catholic Action of the South*, May 20, 1954, 21, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

Although the Supreme Court decision only applied to public schools, Rummel and the New Orleans Archdiocesan School Board publicly endorsed the federal mandate in a statement released in a 1954 issue of *The Catholic Conscience*. Speaking for the board, Reverend Henry Bezou said, “We recognize and fully approve of the decision of the United States Supreme Court on this important question of non-segregation of the Negro and white races in education.”²⁸⁴ At a meeting of the New Orleans Council of Church, participants passed a resolution requesting that state legislators, “exercise clear and calm judgment and Christian good will in all their attitudes and actions concerning this vital matter in accordance with the ideals of our Christian faith.” However, while the statement released by the parochial school board expressed a great deal of enthusiasm towards the passing of the *Brown* decision, it also warned of “the difficulties involved in the practical application of this decision of the highest tribunal in the land.” The statement was optimistic in its suggestion “that all should work earnestly and sympathetically to the end that a practical implementation of the decision may be successfully effected.”²⁸⁵

Phase 1: 1954-1955

In the wake of the Supreme Court decision, both excitement and caution coursed through the black community. The May 1954 edition of the *Louisiana Weekly* proclaimed to its readers, “Our long years of hope and faith in democracy have

²⁸⁴ “Catholic Board Favors Ruling: Backs High Court Stand Against Segregation,” *Times-Picayune*, May 18, 1954, 1, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

been justified with this truly great decision.” The *Weekly* also stated that blacks feared that after the politicians and legislatures criticized the decision, “few, if any, private citizens, businessmen, clergymen, etc. will have the courage to publicly state they accept what the High Court has ruled.” The piece poked fun at the inevitable southern response, which the *Weekly* stated was “understandable, to a degree, for southerners are generally about as free as Russians to air opinions contrary to what is allegedly accepted as southern custom.”²⁸⁶

Blacks in New Orleans were cautious for good reason; two months after the *Brown* decision, Senator William M. Rainach chaired a new Joint Legislative Committee to Maintain Segregation in New Orleans. The group set to work drafting laws designed to prevent the implementation of *Brown*, and ultimately the Louisiana legislature issued three bills. The first of these acts cut off state support for all schools except segregated public schools, whereas, the second allowed school board members to assign pupils to schools on an individual basis. The last sanctioned segregated schools. These were enforced by the state police as a means of securing, “public health, morals, better education, peace and the good order.” An appendage to the amendments made it legal for the legislature to revise the constitution whenever they saw fit instead of adhering to the normal schedule of every other year. In this period, Willie Rainach, a state legislator and Leander Perez, district

²⁸⁶ “The U.S Supreme Court Decision,” *Louisiana Weekly*, May 29, 1954, 4-B, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library; Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), 170.

attorney of St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes, became the face of opposition to the *Brown* decision. Together they waged a statewide campaign to pass the amendments which would prevent the implementation of the *Brown* edict. By November of that year, Governor Robert Kennon signed the legislative acts into law. Archbishop Rummel blasted the new state law that would undoubtedly slow the pace of desegregation in the state's public schools, but remained calm in the knowledge that the state government had no authority over church affairs.²⁸⁷

Brown highlighted the unconstitutionality of "separate but equal" legislation but the mandate only figuratively toppled Jim Crow in public and private institutions. Two strains of thought on desegregation characterized the response of Southern bishops following *Brown*. The first group of bishops had either considered integration or had already taken steps toward integrating their schools; the second group of Southern bishops decided to wait for the Supreme Court's guidelines detailing when and how the federal decree should be implemented. Meanwhile, public school officials in Southern states chose to wait for further directives from the Supreme Court and the state legislature. As a result, in the months after *Brown*, most black and white children still attended segregated public schools in all of the states south of the Mason-Dixon line.

²⁸⁷ "Private, Parochial School Excluded from Legislation," *Louisiana Weekly*, July 10, 1954, 1, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library; "Archbishop Blasts Laws During Segregation Bans," *The Register*, August 18, 1954, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Rachel L. Emanuel and Alexander P. Tureaud, Jr., *A More Noble Cause: A.P. Tureaud and the Struggles for Civil Rights in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 182-183.

Following *Brown*, the Knights of Peter Claver, a black Catholic fraternal order of laymen, initially founded in 1909 in Mobile, Alabama, but with headquarters in New Orleans at the time of the mandate, endorsed the decision at their annual meeting that month. The group was national in scope with a set of national officers, supreme knight, a secretary, a treasurer, and an advocate. The organization also had a national board of directors, which drew its members from the cities of Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and New Orleans, all with significant black Catholic populations. The Knights and their junior organizations promoted community improvement and provided several social services to African American Catholics in these locales. The Knights asserted, “This decision in its scope and effect has resounded throughout the world to the great credit of our nation and to the democracies and the free people throughout the world.”²⁸⁸ On St. Peter Claver Day, scheduled for September 9 of that year, the Knights promised to “invoke the blessings of God upon the court, that it might continue to protect and defend the rights of all citizens.”²⁸⁹

The Catholic Interracial Council of New York, in a November report, named the Catholic parishes that had begun the move toward full racial inclusion within their schools. Roughly two and half months after the historic ruling, Oklahoma Catholic schools were open to students regardless of race. Catholic officials in the

²⁸⁸ “Claverites Air Views in High Court’s Decision,” *Louisiana Weekly*, August 7, 1954, 1, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1; Rachel L. Emanuel and Alexander P. Tureaud, Jr., *A More Noble Cause: A.P. Tureaud and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011, 76-77.

diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina reported, “integration [is] mandatory in the five parochial high schools,” and requested but not mandated at the elementary school level. Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio made, “integration mandatory on all levels of Catholic education.” Likewise, Tennessee announced that all Catholic schools in the Nashville area planned to integrate that fall. In Washington, DC, integration reportedly occurred at every level of education. Alabama, on the other hand, maintained separate facilities for black and white students. In Louisiana, Archbishop Joseph Rummel faced off against the Louisiana Legislature as they tried to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling. As a result, archdiocesan officials elected to “await the tribunal’s [Supreme Court] implementing directive before going ahead with integration in the grade and high schools.”²⁹⁰

Numa Rousseve, a Creole Catholic Associate Professor of Art at Xavier University, addressed the University’s Preparatory Parent-Teacher Association in February of 1955. In the address, Mr. Rousseve scolded “complacent Catholics who remain silent when confronted by issues which demand that they speak for the benefit of their fellowmen.”²⁹¹ He argued that the Catholic Church needed to take the lead in school integration, and although he applauded Archbishop Rummel in his overall efforts towards gradual integration, he praised those of Archbishop Lucey

²⁹⁰ Catholic Interracial Council, N.C.W.C. News Service, “Southern Catholic Schools in Lead in Putting Court Segregation Ban in Effect,” September 13, 1954, 6, *African Americans and the Roman Catholic Church, ca. 1920s-Present*, Xavier University, New Orleans, LA

²⁹¹ “Rousseve Bemoans Complacency of Catholics in Human Relations,” *Louisiana Weekly*, February 12, 1955, 2, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

of San Antonio, Archbishops Ritter of Louisville, and Warren of North Carolina who immediately integrated their Catholic schools following *Brown*. Along the same lines, at a ceremony at St. Katherine's Church honoring Reverend Fred Fischer's 25th year of priesthood, Catholic Clarence A. Laws, a NAACP field secretary, urged Catholics to take leadership in desegregating education. In his statement, Laws traced man's basic rights to man's religious heritage, stating, "The church has an obligation to demonstrate to the rest of the world that men can pray, work and learn together."²⁹² Early on, black Catholics clamored for Catholic support and initiative in integrating its facilities, but Rummel resigned himself and his human relations council to a plan of gradual desegregation.

The church's decision to await further directives from the Supreme Court had the added effect of allowing anti-integration leaders to strengthen their footing after the Court's decision. In 1955, in response to *Brown I* and *II*, Willie Rainach created Louisiana's first White Citizen's Council. Prominent white politicians and professional men filled the ranks of the council, which made it difficult to implement integration, because it was ultimately left up to local state officials. Emile Wagner, who sat on the school board, and Leander Perez were early members of the Rainach's Louisiana Citizens Council and were prolific in establishing the New Orleans branch of the council. As state and church officials awaited further

²⁹² "Urges Catholics Take Leadership in Integration," *Louisiana Weekly*, May 28, 1955, 2, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

directives from the Court, Rainach's council continued to expand.²⁹³

In May of that year, as the NAACP began preparing its next set of resolutions for the Supreme Court, they also prepared their southern branches to petition their local schools boards to end segregation. A.P. Tureaud, a member of the Knights of Peter Claver and the NAACP, began to work in the courts to initiate the desegregation of public schools in the city. The Supreme Court's verdict in *Brown II*, read publicly on May 31, 1955, echoed the sentiments of *Brown I*'s main argument of the, "fundamental principle that racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional." *Brown II* further dictated that, "all provisions of federal states or local law requiring or permitting such discrimination must yield to this principle." Unfortunately, *Brown II* did not set a concrete deadline for public schools to desegregate; the Supreme Court simply directed school boards to make a "prompt and reasonable start" regarding their directives. Ultimately, the Court left the power to decide the pace of desegregation up to the lower courts.²⁹⁴

Around this time, Archbishop Rummel created a twelve-member committee of clergy and laity tasked with a plan for desegregating Catholic schools. From June 15 to July 29 of that year, the group held four general meetings at Notre Dame Seminary. The purpose of the Committee on Desegregation was to make recommendations on how best to carry out integration as dictated by the Supreme Court's mandate. Their research provided Rummel information on the stakes of

²⁹³ Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1996), 228-231.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 231-240.

integration. By June of 1955, Rummel had before him a numerical breakdown of the general consensus on integration among Catholics within the archdiocese. Seventy percent of the southeastern part of the state voted to disobey the Supreme Court's ruling to integrate. The southeastern portion of the state housed 19 parishes alone and had the heaviest concentration of Catholics. The southwestern and northern parts of the state also reported a majority vote against implementing *Brown*. Statewide, 75% of responders voted against integrating schools.²⁹⁵

The results of a questionnaire that the archdiocese passed out to pastors of city parishes and the principals of city schools may have added to Rummel's hesitancy to integrate. Although most parishioners they polled "felt segregation involved a moral issue, a clear majority also felt an integrated educational program was, highly desirable, the survey also affirmed that parents would, "not be favorable to integration."²⁹⁶ Rummel drew up an announcement documenting his committee's efforts, which he advised pastors to read to their congregations. He recognized the moral and spiritual obligation to rectify the issue of inequitable Catholic education,

²⁹⁵ Letter, Lester E. Kabacoff to Charles Plauche, "Integration Tally General Census, June 1955, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Committee to Study Desegregation of Catholic Schools of Archdiocese of New Orleans, August 9, 1955, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Members of the Committee included Bishop L. Abel Caillouet, Msgr. Henry Bezou, Joseph Pyzikiewicz, Msgr. Leonard Robin, Rev. Ivan Huber C.S.S.P, Rev. Gilbert Demers S.S.J. Fred Bahlinger K.S.G, Victor Labat, William Guste, Sr. K.S.G., Mrs Aynard Hebert, and Mrs. Ethel Young, Mrs. Philip Hornung.

²⁹⁶ "Statistical Summary of Answers to Desegregation," July 1955, 1, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

but he also did not want to be oblivious to “certain difficulties arising from long standing segregation.” Rummel also worried about the present crowded conditions of their black and white schools and most importantly, “the cost of maintaining de-segregated schools and the general effect which premature de-segregation may have upon the present favorable attitude of our people towards Catholic education.” The committee’s study reported that a clear majority of pastors and principles who responded, “felt it was unwise to begin integration,” that September because they feared that they, “would have some withdrawal of pupils to segregated schools.” The pastors reported that they had done nothing by the date of the study to prepare their schools for integration, and secondly, even if they had room in their schools for black children, ten out of twenty-seven said no because their schools were already crowded; another three said no unless the school board ordered them to, and the remaining 14 agreed to do so only on the condition of being ordered to or if all other Catholic schools were integrated as well.²⁹⁷

On August 9th 1955, Reverend Abel Caillouet, the chairman of the archbishop’s committee, submitted the resolution, which declared, “Integration will be required as of the opening of the 1956 school session.” Integration, however would only take place for 1st grade or kindergarten students. After the Ordinary and the Consultors of the Archdiocese heard the resolution at an August 10th meeting, they gave it their unanimous approval. Rummel considered the report, “a realistic temperate and practical solution of the important problem,” and thereby advocated its

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 1-9.

acceptance in all parochial schools under the archdiocese. After reading the report, the archbishop expressed the hope that a “similar clarification of public regulation and policies affecting de-segregation in conformity with the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court,” would occur.²⁹⁸ Following their August resolution, the group continued to meet and research a practical plan for integration. Soon after they began convening, the group produced a “program” for integration informed by the tenets of Catholic interracialism. The program consisted of a series of interracial Catholic conferences, pronouncements against racism in the parochial schools, and tests committee members believed necessary before implementing *Brown*. As their proposed 1956 deadline for integration left them 1 year to prepare, the Catholic Church quietly studied, educated, and consulted about the course racial integration should take in the Catholic Church.

The NAACP, affiliated with Catholic lay and clergy in the city, spoke out against Rummel’s decision to postpone desegregation of parochial schools until the 1956 school term. They stated, “We of the NAACP had hoped that integration in Catholic schools here would have become effective this fall” and the organization mentioned they had heard others express the same hope.²⁹⁹ The group did acknowledge Rummel’s attempts at a peaceful solution but reported that while many

²⁹⁸ Committee on the Segregation of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, “Suggestions for Program,” undated (circa 1955), 1, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

²⁹⁹ “Archbishop said Ruling in Accord with Teachings,” *Louisiana Weekly*, September 3, 1955, 1, 7, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

blacks understood Rummel's gradual action, "others paralleled the situation with that of a person who had been sinning all his life and suddenly realizes he had been wrong and decided that after one 'last fling for a year' he will mend his ways and follow the straight and narrow."³⁰⁰ However, by early 1956, many were hopeful that integration would at last take place in September. The *Louisiana Weekly* reported that "racial bigotry might suffer its first major defeat in Louisiana come September of this year with the possible beginning of integration in New Orleans Catholic schools . . . despite 'foolish' action by certain Catholic parents and racists."³⁰¹

Phase 2: 1956-1957

Archbishop Rummel's second pastoral letter, "The Morality of Segregation," issued in February of 1956, marked the second phase of parochial school desegregation. In his letter, Rummel made no reference to the archdioceses' proposed deadline for integration in fall of that year; instead, he used the space to denounce difficulties in reaching, "a propitious solution," in accordance with Christian justice and charity."³⁰² In the five-page letter addressed to the clergy and laity of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Rummel also reaffirmed his stance on segregation, racism, and racial prejudice in the debate over school integration. Rummel had hoped the pronouncement would function as a moral guidebook on

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 7.

³⁰¹ "Integration Coming, May Begin This Year Says Msgr. Plauche," *Louisiana Weekly*, January 28, 1956, 1, 8, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

³⁰² Archbishop Joseph Rummel. "The Morality of Racial Segregation," *Pastoral Letter*, Feb. 11, 1956; 1-3, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

Catholic race relations and social justice. Armed with the Old and New Testaments and a number of prominent directives by influential Popes of the past, Rummel declared racial segregation “morally wrong and sinful” on three grounds. First, segregation was a “denial of the unity and solidarity of the human race as conceived by God in the creation of man in Adam and Eve.”³⁰³ Secondly, it was, “a denial of the unity and universality of the Redemption.” Finally, segregation was morally reprehensible and existed in opposition to the law of solidarity and charity as dictated by Pope Pius XII and to the moral dictates of justice and love, which by God’s will were supposed to regulate human relations. While the letter had the intended effect of emphasizing the archbishop’s commitment to ending segregation in parochial schools--so much so that several priests refused to read the letter to their congregations and other dissenters burned a cross on the archbishop’s lawn in response to his proclamation—it simultaneously diminished the hopes of pro-integration forces.³⁰⁴ Despite Rummel’s radical statements deriding segregation in the Catholic Church, he still set no clear date for desegregation.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Ibid., 1-3.

³⁰⁴ Diane T. Manning and Perry Rogers, “Desegregation of New Orleans Parochial Schools,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 71, no. ½ (Winter/Spring 2002): 33-34. By 1950 there were 12 all black Catholic churches. Taken from *The Louisiana Weekly*, “Is Official Policy Official Practice?” April 1, 1950.

³⁰⁵ “N.O. Bishop Raps Segregation,” *New Orleans States-Item*, February 20, 1956. *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Prelate Plans Further Study,” *Times-Picayune*, February 20, 1956, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

In the public domain, anti-integrationists suffered a major legal defeat in the early months of 1956 when the United States District Court of the Eastern District of Louisiana handed down their decree on February 15, 1956, which proclaimed that the New Orleans School Board must adhere to the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*:

[The school board is] hereby restrained and enjoined from requiring and permitting segregation of the races in any school under their supervision, from and after such time as may be necessary to make arrangements for admissions of children to such schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed.³⁰⁶

A. P. Tureaud served as counsel for Karl Benjamin Bush in his suit against the Orleans Parish School Board for their sanction of segregation in public schools throughout city.³⁰⁷ Leander Perez, Fred S. LeBlanc, W. Scott Wilkinson, and Gerard A. Rault defended the school board in the matter. The Louisiana legislature, however, ignored the federal court's ruling and began ratifying laws that reinforced segregation in public schools, specifically in cities that had a population of more than 300,000; New Orleans of course was the only city in Louisiana that met the requirements. Following the *Bush* decision, District Judge Skelly Wright ordered the Orleans Parish School Board, "to make arrangements for admission of children...on racially non-discriminatory basis with all deliberate speed."³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Earl Benjamin Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board, February 15, 1956, 1, Box, 48, Folder 12, *A.P. Tureaud Papers, 1798-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁰⁸ Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), 305.

Yet, Rainach's council did not stand down. Following the successful outcome of the *Bush* suit, Rainach and LeBlanc charged the NAACP with "subversion and violation of Louisiana law," which functioned to, "render the organization virtually impotent for the next five years."³⁰⁹ The Louisiana Citizens Council, with between 50,000-100,000 members, quickly became the largest anti-integration organization; its New Orleans' branch touted a membership of 25,000.³¹⁰ Their influence was evident in a *New York Times* report stating that "the impact of the problem has not fallen evenly upon the whole south."³¹¹ The report noted that constituents of each state chose to either conform to the Supreme Court mandate, dragged their feet on the issue, or remained indecisive. The District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia moved toward the goal of racial integration, while states such as Arkansas, Delaware, Tennessee, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida sat divided over the issue; this division ultimately functioned to delay integration in these states. Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia, hotbeds of the confederacy, continued to adamantly resist integration in the wake of *Brown*.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 269-273; Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 194-195.

³¹⁰ Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harpers Collins Publishers, 1996), 269-273; Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 194-195.

³¹¹ John N. Popham, (Introduction) "Report on the South: The Integration Issue," *The New York Times*, March 1956, S-1, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³¹² For more detailed information on the road to integration for each state mentioned above please see, "Report on the South: The Integration Issue," *The New York Times*,

While the battle to integrate public schools across the South continued in the courts, the church waged its own campaign to gather information concerning the impact of the anti-integration organizations active in New Orleans. Upon the request of Reverend Henry Bezou, parochial school superintendent, white layman John Gehl attended a February 1956 meeting sponsored by the Friends and Members of Dixiecrats of Louisiana and the Knights of the White Christians. Gehl's task was to attend the three-hour meeting, take notes, and compile them into a report to be submitted to Archbishop Rummel. Gehl reported that he had gotten wind of the meeting after a member of one of the organizations handed his grandfather a flier for the event. After speaking with his grandfather further it became apparent that those fliers were circulated throughout the city. Gehl attended the meeting and witnessed a mixed group of attendees, including entire families, who ranged in age, gender, and class. The first person to speak at the meeting was seventy-six-year old Mrs. Harry Freeburg who stated that she had always been, "100% Roman Catholic and 100% segregationist." Her talk, which received the greatest round of applause, concluded with an accusation against Rummel, who, she declared "was aiding Communism by his stand on, 'the issue of school desegregation.'" She likened the Archbishop to a, "dictator like Hitler, the Kaiser etc."³¹³ In the following months, Rummel saw further signs of white

March 1956, 1-16 and Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collin Publishers, 1996).

³¹³ Memorandum, "A meeting sponsored by the Friends and Members of Dixiecrats of Louisiana and Knights of the White Christians," February 29, 1956, 1-4, *Catholic*

opposition to desegregation when the state legislature voided the federal court's ruling in *Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board*.³¹⁴

Such opposition ultimately led Rummel to delay the desegregation of the local Catholic schools. On July 31, 1956, Rummel released another pastoral letter titled "Integration in Catholic Schools," in which he reaffirmed his commitment to integration but added, "Certain difficulties still remain and we are not now prepared to introduce integration generally."³¹⁵ Thus, it is "necessary to postpone integration in schools in which it has not yet been effected at least until September 1957." Rummel hoped that in the meantime he and his supporters could "overcome difficulties and make necessary preparations," for integration.³¹⁶ The archbishop once again put off integration because of an insufficient level of support from priests and laity. The refusal of some priests to read the archbishop's pastoral letters before their congregation convinced their parishioners that the archbishop had no authority to speak on the issue.³¹⁷

Notable members of the church who supported Archbishop Joseph

Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³¹⁴ Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), 270.

³¹⁵ Joseph Rummel, *Integration in Catholic Schools*, July 31, 1956. Pastoral Letter. 1-2, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹⁷ Katherine Martensen, "Region, Religion, and Social Action: The Catholic Committee of the South, 1939-1956," *The Catholic Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (April 1982): 265-266; Justin D. Poche, "The Catholic Citizens' Council: Religion and White Resistance in Post-War Louisiana," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 55-56.

Rummel's desire to integrate Catholic facilities in the New Orleans included, Philip H. Desmarais, Raymond B. Floyd, William J. Guste, Jr., Benjamin J. Johnson, John P. Nelson, Jr., Ivor A. Trapolin, Edmund R. Vales, and Milton C. Vigo. The group proposed a plan to prepare members of the archdiocese for integration. Their plan entailed a series of conferences directed at the clergy, religious, seminarians, and officers of Catholic parish organizations, including teachers. The conferences would emphasize the charity and justice components of Catholic social action, an approach that was still committed to interracial organizing. The archdiocese needed to make better use of the *Clarion Herald* to reaffirm their position on integration. Once the conferences availed the priests of the archbishop's wishes on the matter, then the reeducation of pastors needed to begin. Gaining the support of parish pastors was important because they were a direct link to parents, school children, and members of other Catholic organizations. The fourth suggestion was hiring a testing agency to provide and score a series of intelligence quotient tests for black and white children. The final proposal asked the archbishop to appoint a full-time director that would oversee the program.³¹⁸

Opposition to desegregation intensified through May and June of that year.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Letter, Philip H. Des Merais and others to Archbishop Rummel, March 25, 1957, 1-4, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³¹⁹ Letter, Andrew P. Carter to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, July 13, 1957, 1-2, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Archbishop Joseph Rummel to Andrew P. Carter, July 26,

Emile Wagner, a member of the Orleans School Board, and staunch segregationist, denounced Rummel's pastoral letter on segregation, bluntly questioning his moral authority on the matter. Those who sided with Rummel on the topic of integration received death threats over the phone; these were most likely from the the Louisiana Citizens Council, although no one could ever prove it. The fact that Rummel's pastoral letter on the morality of segregation did not reaffirm the archdiocese's projected 1956 deadline provided more ammunition for anti-integration forces.³²⁰

The black secular press took offense to Rummel's postponement of the Catholic date to integrate schools. An editorial in the *Louisiana Weekly* entitled, "Strong Catholic Leadership Lacking" stated, "it is quite obvious now the Catholic leadership in New Orleans is timid, cautious and perhaps more fearful of the loud mouthed bigots than of doing what is morally and spiritually right according to Catholic doctrine."³²¹ The 1957 article condemned the church for bowing to the will of "evil men" and highlighted this as a moral contradiction not in line with God's word.

The archdiocesan response to the harsh *Louisiana Weekly* article was to point out that the author had "overlooked certain facts and realities, which, upon examination will show, plainly that the criticism leveled against the Archbishop of

1957, 1-4, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³²⁰ Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 199-202.

³²¹ "Strong Catholic Leadership Lacking," *Louisiana Weekly*, September 7, 1957, 1, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

New Orleans was unjust.”³²² The letter reaffirmed that there was “not a single segregated meeting for Catholic School Principles or for the Catholic School Teachers’ Institutes, attended by some two thousand teachers annually.” The response continued, “workshops, lectures, school planning of all kind—whether held in a school for whites or in one for Negroes—have all been integrated.”³²³ At the time, both major and minor seminaries within the archdiocese accepted black applicants. The letter concluded that “progress has been made, we have reason to feel more progress will be made despite the physical and legal problems which seemed to have temporarily slowed it down.” Although black Catholics reluctantly agreed with the archdiocese’s response, A.P. Tureaud and Numa Rousseve requested a meeting with the archbishop to discuss the matter further. Ultimately, with criticism coming from all angles, Rummel was unable to implement integration in parochial schools.³²⁴

Phase 3: 1958-1962

The third and final phase of Catholic desegregation occurred from 1958-1961. The events in Little Rock, AR in 1957 cast a shadow over the movement to integrate public schools. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus dispatched the national guard in an effort to prevent the court-mandated integration of Central High School in Little Rock. The act forced President Eisenhower to discharge troops in order to restore order. In the late 1950s, as a result of massive white resistance, the desegregation

³²² Ibid., 1.

³²³ Ibid., 1.

³²⁴ Letter, Henry Bezou to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, September 27, 1957, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

movement of the period slowed. In fact, by the end of President Eisenhower's term, less than 2% of black students attended desegregated public schools in the South.

In 1958, the American Catholic Bishops released their first concrete pronouncement on race in the US, titled, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience." In reference to blacks and integration, they stated, "We owe to these fellow citizens who have contributed so largely to the development of our country, and for whose welfare history imposes on us a special obligation of justice, to see that they have in fact the rights that are given them in our constitution."³²⁵ They insisted that the heart of the race question is both moral and religious, but despite these assertions, the church at the local level in the South continued to move at a snail's pace toward parochial school integration.³²⁶

As white and black tempers in and around New Orleans heightened in the late 1950s, Archbishop Rummel released his third Pastoral letter in September 1958, titled "The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Peace." In it, Rummel argued for peace within the Church but also for peace at a national level. The archbishop discussed the perpetuation of racial discrimination, outlining the sociological, physical, and emotional damage associated with forced segregation and the sense of inferiority it invoked in African Americans. Rummel proclaimed that "these discriminations are unjustifiable violations of the Christian way of life

³²⁵ The Josephites, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience: Statement of the Bishops of the United States, 1958," 1, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

³²⁶ Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1995), 223.

and the principles of our American heritage.”³²⁷ His words reflected a deep commitment to the *Brown* decision and its arguments concerning the psychological impact of separate but equal on the psyches of African Americans. However, he still made no concrete date for parochial school integration. A reason for the continued postponement for implementation of the mandates of the *Brown* decision is evident in a letter written from Mrs. Loeb of St. Leo to Archbishop Rummel in which she notified him that her priest had failed to read the bishop’s letter on racial harmony in its entirety at mass on Sunday morning.³²⁸

Following the events of Little Rock, the Louisiana legislature returned from their recess with a renewed focus. Leander Perez continued drafting bills that further sanctioned segregated public education. The plaintiff in the *Bush* case and his lawyer, A.P Tureaud, were asked to return to court that year because the school board had yet to develop a plan for integration almost three years after the verdict came down. Judge Skelly Wright ordered the Orleans Parish School Board to prepare an overall plan for integration in New Orleans public schools by March 1, 1960. In his address, Judge Wright drew on the incident in Little Rock and expressed the hope that New Orleans would not be another “Little Rock.” The Judge placed the responsibility of avoiding this outcome on the media, clergy,

³²⁷ Archbishop Joseph Rummel, “The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Peace,” *Pastoral Letter*, September 29, 1958, 2-3, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

³²⁸ “Archbishop’s Letter Read In Part Only,” *Louisiana Weekly*, October 25, 1958, 1-2, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

community leaders, and the general public and most importantly the school board.

Meanwhile, on July 2, 1959, Senator William M. Rainach announced his bid for the governorship of Louisiana. At this point he was the, “only leader in any Southern State who has headed both the public and private resistance of his people to the integration movement.” Red-baiting in this period intensified as the Louisiana Citizens Council further sought to discredit civil rights groups, such as the NAACP, by levying at them allegations of communist rhetoric, and they also labeled any white pro-integration leader devoted to integration a communist. A July 1959 report of the council commended that the Orleans Parish School Board, “courageous[ly] fight against Federal court integration orders, and we congratulate the Board on its announced intention to appeal Judge Wrights’ decision.”³²⁹

At this time, Archbishop Rummel decided that the desegregation of Catholic schools would occur no later than in public schools. It is important to remember that none of the obstructionist bills passed by the Louisiana State Legislature applied to the Catholic Church; the archbishop could have at any point ended segregation with the stroke of his pen. However, public attacks by the citizens’ council and the allegiance of some school board officials to segregation allowed for little action on the part of the aging leader.³³⁰ Rummel, in his eightieth year, had lost some of his early zest and the repeated attacks by segregationist

³²⁹ *The Citizens’ Council Report* 1, no. 6, July 1959, Metairie, Louisiana, 1-2, Box 2, Folder 8, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

forces left him physically and emotionally weak.

The school board had no intention of adhering to the judge's order to produce a plan for integration by March 1960 deadline. Emile Wagner, a school board member, stated he would close public schools before he agreed to integrate them. On October 9, 1959, A.P. Tureaud warned Judge Wright, in a private meeting at which segregationist Gerald Rault was in attendance, that there would be considerable opposition to his order if it were not postponed. Wright acquiesced and put off the school board's deadline to produce a plan for integration from March 1, 1960 to May 16, 1960. Wagner's public endorsement of private schools as a means of preventing public school integration left Wright no other choice.³³¹ Without a concrete date for public or parochial school integration, the church continued the reeducation of its white Catholics.

By May of that year, only 749 of 7,016 school districts across the South had desegregated. When the May deadline came, the school board still had not prepared a plan for integration. Judge Wright postponed public school desegregation once again, but he went a step further and ordered public schools to open by September on an integrated basis. Wright suggested that integration begin with the first grade and move at a gradual pace, one grade year at a time, until all of the grades were integrated. His plan was moderate in the sense that he did not get rid of the dual

³³¹ "Negro Urban League Head, Cleric Talk to High School Pupils on Mixing," *Citizens' Report 2, no. 1*, January, 1960, 1-2, Box 2, Folder 9, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 331-332.

system of education, he simply opened up both white and black schools to either race. He also gave children the option to transfer schools, “if such transfers,” were not, “based on considerations of race.”³³²

The May 1960 issue of the *Community* read, “The problem of the Catholic Segregationists will be solved only by the indirect approach of teaching him what it means to be a Catholic.”³³³ Archbishop Rummel and the priests who supported him continued mass circulation of materials that outlined the Catholic plan for school integration. These print materials, produced usually by the Archbishop or the CHR, were to be delivered to local bishops within the archdiocese. At a meeting with college students on May 27, Rummel “again and again reiterated that this isn’t the time to integrate due to material losses that may be incurred by the Catholic schools and church.”³³⁴ The bishop stressed that many factors played a part in when and how Catholic schools would be integrated, some of which were “out of the control of the church authorities.”³³⁵ He reaffirmed his commitment to integrating schools no later than the public schools; he still however, lacked a substantial base of supporters to remain true to this promise. School board members now hoped that newly elect pro-segregation governor Jimmie Davis would make good on his promise to maintain

³³² Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 331-332.

³³³ “Priests, Church and Segregation,” *Community*, May 1960, 1-2, *A.P. Tureaud Papers, 1798-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³³⁴ Statement, “Order to Integrate Public schools, May, 24, 1960, 1, Box 9, Folder 24, *Charles B. Rousseve Papers, 1842-1994*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

segregation if elected. While Rainach did not become governor, he still remained an indispensable fixture of the pro-segregation movement in the state and city.³³⁶

On June 16, the archdiocese convened a meeting of pastors to discuss the racial integration of parochial schools. At the meeting, diocesan officials proclaimed the imminent racial integration of schools in the city based on the Judge Wright's order to integrate by September. The church was now confronted with the difficulty of syncretizing parochial integration with public schools due to what the archdiocese referred to as the "public interest" and to do so "at least [at] the same time as public schools." The Church recognized that state laws at this point, "emphasized resistance; abuse; threat of privation, intimidation and even violence," if entities continued their push for integration. The Church remained hopeful, however, especially after Judge Skelly's order that proved that pro-segregation attempts to circumvent federal law had, "proven ineffective, and were showing signs of being gradually abandoned."³³⁷ The Church admitted that it had remained silent following white opposition and officials at the meeting planned to

³³⁶ Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 331-332.

³³⁷ Meeting of Pastors in RE Racial Integration of Schools, June 16, 1960, 1-4, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Jackson Ricau, "How to Preserve Segregated Schooling in Louisiana," July 8, 1960, 1-7, Box 2, Folder 5, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; "We Must Win Fight for States Rights as Showdown Nears in School Case," *Citizens' Report 2, no.7*, 1-2, Box 2, Folder 9, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Save Our Schools, "The Hour of Decision," Newsletter no. 3, August 23, 1960, 1, *Save Our Schools Records, 1957-1963*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

continue to await the end result of negotiation between the New Orleans School Board and the state. The Catholic Church would only desegregate their schools when the Public School did so.

Two months after his meeting with pastors on the issues of racial integration in the city's parochial schools, Rummel released his fourth pastoral letter entitled "Reopening of School." The letter announced that segregated Catholic schools would open for the September school year, despite the "state of uncertainty which at the present writing still prevails regarding the operation of our public schools."³³⁸ The archbishop stated, "when school integration can take place the issue will receive consideration of a more practical nature."³³⁹ Until then, Rummel urged Catholic parents to maintain their obligation to educate their children in Catholic schools. In his letter he also told Catholic parents who sent their children to public schools that they had a moral duty as parents to provide their children a Catholic education. In this, the Catholic Church may have been capitalizing on the unstable reality of public schools at the time by luring parents to its then segregated Catholic schools.

The archbishop received several letters displaying mixed reactions among Catholic parishioners. Some applauded his acknowledgment of a date for desegregation even though it was not set in stone. For instance, Catholic layman

³³⁸ Archbishop Joseph Rummel, "Reopening of School," September 6, 1960, 1, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Terrence C. Turner wrote, “Years from now all Catholics will be proud of the early stand taken by Church in this difficult matter.”³⁴⁰ Others criticized the archbishop’s slow pace. Roy Moret Jr., a Creole layman, critiqued what he viewed as a sense of apathy and general “lack of concerted effort on the part of the Catholic hierarchy.” In a realistic display of charity, he contended that the Church’s apparent “procrastination has led to the present situation which we Catholics find ourselves—the embarrassing position of being bested by the government and even by some private institutions.” Most Catholic facilities still practiced segregation at this time. Catholic hospitals, such as Charity Hospital, avoided accepting black patients even on a segregated basis. In reference to Church hierarchy, Moret stated, “They hesitate to act among their own, justifying their stand with the possibility of material losses to the Church.” He condemned the Church’s practice of making material excuses for what he called a “lack of moral fiber.”³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ John E. Rousseau, “New Orleans Catholics: Ask Archbishop to Integrate Schools,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 13, 1960, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library; Letter, Chris Malpie to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, August 23, 1960, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Terence R. Hunter to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, August 24, 1960, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Dagmar Foley to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, August 24, 1960, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Thomas J. Roshetko to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, August 31, 1960, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁴¹ Letter, Roy J. Moret to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, September 4, 1960, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

In this year, the Save Our School organization was the first to emerge with the intention of keeping the schools open. Organizers Rosa Keller, Gladys Kahn and several of their liberal friends surfaced in 1960 and publicly proclaimed that they would use “all legitimate means [to further] a statewide system of free education and to offer support to all elected or appointed public officials in their efforts to continue free education.” Immediately following their pronouncement, the Louisiana Citizen’s Council accused the group of affiliating with communists and asked the House of Un-American Activities Committee to investigate the organization’s financial backing. The group, however made sure that they were clear on their position concerning Communism; member Ann Dlugos stated, “Communists-that was what we didn’t want to be called. We didn’t care if they called us nigger-lovers. And we didn’t care if they called us integrationists....but we really weren’t out of the McCarthy era.”³⁴²

As 1960 came to a close, the public school board and the courts reached a conclusion on the desegregation of public schools. November 14, also known as D-Day by pro- and anti-integrationists alike, marked the end of public school segregation in New Orleans. On that day, approximately 123 public schools in the city opened for integrated instruction. Most teachers did come into class that day but about 100 opted to miss the historic day. Many of the students did not attend school in November, which forced the enrollment numbers down. The city stationed local

³⁴² Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 340-341.

police at every elementary school throughout the city, and the Chief of Police Giarrusso made public statements about the duty of police officers to maintain peace in the city. Giarrusso warned his police force to put aside their personal feelings about integration and do their job. By 1961, the number of white students dropped in public schools, as white children abandoned local integrated public schools to attend private segregated educational cooperatives. At least twenty-four of these private schools were already open or at some early stage of development.³⁴³

By this point, the Archbishops of San Antonio, Raleigh, Texas, North Carolina, and St. Louis had all desegregated their parochial schools. Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter had taken an even more radical stance by threatening to excommunicate anyone who challenged his order to integrate.³⁴⁴ Parochial schools in New Orleans, however, did not follow the lead of many other parochial schools in the South. The black press critiqued the slow pace of Archbishop Rummel in securing black rights; they called out church hierarchy whenever they clearly appeared complicit in maintaining segregation. One instance of this occurred when black Catholics realized that Father Carl Schutten planned to serve as a trustee on the New Orleans Educational Foundation headed by long-time segregationist Emile Wagner. The organization was tasked with supervising the city's projected private school cooperatives, which were opening in the wake of public school integration. An April 1961 *Weekly* article by Catholic John E. Rousseau reported that "a large number of

³⁴³ Ibid., 367-368.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 367-368.

Negro Catholics last week expressed shock and anger when the name of a prominent priest was listed as a trustee of the New Orleans Educational Foundation.” In one of the many letters of protest sent to Rummel, Superintendent Bezou, and the *Louisiana Weekly* for print, Joseph M. Ashford, a black Catholic layman, pointed out to Archbishop Rummel that the association of Father Schutten with the foundation “could not be termed beneficial.”³⁴⁵ There was, in fact, cause to be concerned about the proliferation of private segregated cooperatives as an alternative to forced public and parochial school integration. By this point, the overall number of white students in public school had dropped from 40, 498 to 38, 112.³⁴⁶

Although the Church’s handling of school integration had largely failed up to that point, it continued to develop its interracial approach. Under the guidance and direction of Archbishop Rummel, on March 23, 1961 several lay Catholics came together to establish the Catholic Council on Human Relations (CCHR), the purpose of which was to promote interracial justice in New Orleans. The group was interracial in nature and included several prominent white businessmen and notable black Catholics, such as Lenoard Burns and Ernest Morial.³⁴⁷ Henry Cabirac, a prominent businessman and member of the NAACP served as the organization’s executive director and C. Ellis Henican, a lawyer, served as the

³⁴⁵ John E. Rousseau, “Catholic Priest Role in Educational Foundation Rapped,” *Louisiana Weekly*, April 29, 1961, 1, 3, Box 1, Folder 7, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

³⁴⁷ Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 256.

organization's president.³⁴⁸ The committee outlined four main objectives and purposes in their letters of incorporation: to promote "good relationships among peoples of all races in the Archdiocese of New Orleans,"³⁴⁹ to "make known the teachings of the Catholic Church on matters of interracial justice and charity," and to work cooperatively with other public and private organizations. Finally, the controversial committee "exhorted all of the clergy, religious and laity to offer their daily prayers, good works and sacrifices for the peaceful and charitable solution of all problems of human relations."³⁵⁰ The articles of incorporation gave the newly formed group the ability to limit membership to only "Catholic men and women of good will within the Archdiocese of New Orleans." The organization could also appoint clergy to serve the archbishop, make, amend, and repeal its own laws of governance, and establish, "one or more affiliated units within the Archdiocese of New Orleans," with, "such power and authority as it shall consider necessary or desirable."³⁵¹ The first goal set before the CCHR by Rummel was the desegregation of parochial schools. News on the dealings of the CCHR appeared with frequency in Catholic publications, such as *America*, *Ave Maria*, and the *Interracial Review*. It is not clear if the black press also covered the beginnings of

³⁴⁸ "Biographical Sketch-Henry A. Cabirac, Jr.," [1961] 1-3, *Catholic Committee of the South Records, 1939-1977*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁴⁹ Articles of Incorporation of the Catholic Council on Human Relations: Parish of Orleans of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, March 23, 1961, 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9; "Council on Human Relations is Seen As, 'Holy Crusade,'" *Catholic Action of the South*, April 2, 1961, 1A, 4A, Box 4, Folder 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

the committee.

As Rummel began to lose his sight during this period, Bishop John Patrick Cody assumed the position of coadjutor to the archbishop on August 14th. Cody was a liberal who firmly backed the desegregation of Catholic schools. He had a reputation as a tough administrator and he also claimed membership in the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.³⁵² The archbishop had served as auxiliary bishop in the cities of St. Louis, Kansas City, and most recently, St. Joseph. Once in New Orleans, Cody took on more and more of the everyday responsibilities of running the archdiocese that Rummel could no longer do. Meanwhile, pressure exerted on Rummel by black Catholics forced him to take a stance on Schutten's involvement with the New Orleans Educational Foundation. Many other black Catholics had also informed the *Louisiana Weekly* of letters sent and phone calls made to the Chancery concerning Schutten's possible appointment. Others said that they had already begun a campaign to cancel black Catholic subscriptions to Schutten's publication the *Catholic Action of the South*.³⁵³

As of July 1, 1961, St. Louis, San Antonio, and Washington, DC, had desegregated all of their Catholic facilities. Unfortunately, by this point, New Orleans had only desegregated parish and diocesan organizations, but Catholic hospitals,

³⁵² "John Cardinal Cody, Head of Archdiocese in Chicago, is Dead," *New York Times*, April 25, 1982, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁵³ John Rousseau, "Catholic Priest Resigns from School Foundation," *Louisiana Weekly*, April 27, 1961, 1, 10, Box 1, Folder 7, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

athletic programs, elementary schools, high schools, and colleges still remained largely segregated. New Orleans was not alone in its slow pace toward desegregation. Nashville and Raleigh had only desegregated their parochial schools, but at least they had taken one of the strongest stances against segregation in their schools. New Orleans, the southern diocese that had the largest population of black Catholics at 40%.³⁵⁴

Shortly after the Schutten incident, two more scathing articles in the black press came out that scolded the church for its gradual move toward black equality. “Catholics ‘Balk’ Again on Integrating Parochial Schools,” appeared across an August 1961 cover of the *Louisiana Weekly* as black Catholics became convinced the church would never integrate its schools. Meanwhile the archdiocese school board continued to reaffirm its position that Catholic schools would not be integrated until there had been effective public school integration in New Orleans. This in fact meant that parochial schools would, once again, begin the 1961-62 term on a racially segregated basis.³⁵⁵

During this period, the CCHR remained in contact with other Southern dioceses concerning their experiences with desegregation. Through conversations with other interracial councils in neighboring dioceses, the CCHR gained important

³⁵⁴ Catholic Council on Human Relation: Chart Showing Catholic Facilities Desegregated as of July 1, 1961, 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁵⁵ “Catholics ‘Balk’ Again on Integrating Parochial Schools,” *The Louisiana Weekly* August 5, 1961, 1, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

knowledge about the tactical implementation of integration. According to the Catholic Interracial Council of St. Louis, “the goldfish bowl techniques should ordinarily be avoided especially in these days of greater tension in your area.” There are times, it cautioned, “when too much publicity, and I believe you have had this experience, can harm your efforts and even prevent the reaching of your goal.” Based on this input from St. Louis and other cities such as Raleigh and Miami, the CCHR concluded that, “the more quietly desegregation is done the more effective it is done. Avoid the goldfish bowl.” The CCHR had indeed been hard at work in this period but quiet in their push for desegregation. The group’s membership committee distributed 10,000 applications along with 10,000 copies of the 1958 statement by bishops, “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience.” They also held a fund-raising drive among the priests in the archdiocese to offset the cost of the copies. Each member provided an example of racial justice within their own parishes by inviting blacks to join the organization.³⁵⁶

John Rousseau, author of the piece entitled, “Integration of Catholic Schools Poses Problem,” cited an Associated Negro Press report that black Catholics were fed up with the failure of Catholic schools to integrate. The press release quoted a non-Catholic who contended “that Catholic schools have not been integrated even on a token basis,” characterizing this as a “scheme to build up attendance by whites in the Catholic schools” and it noted “the opening of six new Catholic schools built for

³⁵⁶ “Progress Towards Council Goal: Avoiding the Goldfish Bowl,” *Catholic Council on Human Relations* 1, no. 2. September 1961, 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

whites only.” The black press believed this was done to absorb white students fleeing integrated public schools.³⁵⁷

Meanwhile public school desegregation continued without much fanfare; the state had prepared for any physical violence that might occur as a result of desegregation efforts. The federal government had dispatched 150 troops to aid local New Orleans police in their desegregation efforts. The New Orleans School Board had succumbed to court orders and federal intervention, and all but one of their bills, the pupil placement law, now remained on the books. The law, which some thought functioned to perpetuate segregation, ensured that every black child would have to take a test before being admitted to an all-white public school.³⁵⁸

A letter signed by 27 black Catholics active in their respective churches influenced the bishop’s decision to finally act on desegregation. In their letter, black Catholics voiced their opinions on archbishop’s plan for desegregation. They stated, “we believe that in making your prudential judgments on the application of principles concerning race relations, you have centered your attention upon the realities, the reactions, and the sensitivities of WHITE Catholics.” The letter warned the archdiocese of a possible black exodus from the church if integration continued to be placed on the back burner. The Catholic Church’s fear of losing possible souls proved

³⁵⁷“Integration of Catholic School Poses Problem,” *Louisiana Weekly*, October 7, 1961, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library; “Warm Welcome Planned for Archbishop John Cody,” *Louisiana Weekly*, November 4, 1961, 1, 8, University of California, Berkeley, Newspaper and Microforms Library.

³⁵⁸ Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995) 253-255.

to be stronger than its fear of the opposition posed by white Catholic segregationists.³⁵⁹

A black exodus from the Catholic Church had already occurred in the 1920s with the ‘separation of Churches;’ therefore, historical precedence pointed to the possible manifestation of that fear in Rummel’s time. The letter was also a clear argument for social inclusion in the church. The letter concluded with, “We, as Negroes, have long felt that it is most unfortunate that the experience of church administrators and of their advisers is experience within a “white” world. There is no way of knowing the feelings of Negroes unless Negroes are invited to express themselves.”³⁶⁰

Although the CCHR prodded the archbishop to integrate schools in August of 1961, it was not until November of that same year that the bishop issued a decree to do so. It came as a result of a meeting between Superintendent Henry Bezou and state legislator, Maurice Moon Landrieu. In the past, Landrieu had voted against all of the pro-segregation bills posed by the state legislature. At the meeting, Bezou expressed his fear that if parochial schools integrated then pro-segregation state legislators would retaliate by refusing to supply free textbooks or attempt to tax church property.

³⁵⁹ V.P Franklin, “First Came the School: Catholic Evangelization Among African American in The United States, 1827 to the Present,” in *Growing Up African American in Catholic Schools*, eds. Jacqueline Jordan Irvine and Michele Foster (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), 53.

³⁶⁰ 27 Negroes Sign Letter to Warren McKenna Sr and Archbishop Joseph Rummel, November 1961, 1-2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

Once Landrieu lay these worries to rest, Bezou got on board with CCHR's call for desegregation. At a meeting in November, Bezou and the CCHR finally succeeded in getting Rummel to set a date for parochial school integration. All eight grades of Catholic elementary schools were set to desegregate in the fall of 1962. After putting careful thought into their plan to desegregate, council members met with Rummel again that December. At the meeting, Rummel once again elected to put off desegregation until further study. The archbishop was at the time becoming increasingly senile. Rummel expressed his fear that if desegregation took place it would mean, "a deterioration of the Catholic school system." Father Eugene McManus, an instructor of St. Augustine High School and a long time civil rights activist, continued to warn Rummel of the impending black exodus that would undoubtedly take place if he did not set a stern date for integration. McManus' words had some impact on Rummel, as he finally agreed to proceed with the initial plan to desegregate in fall 1962. The archbishop did, however, want to limit integration to the first three grades in an effort to prevent possible economic boycotts of the city's parochial schools. By February of that year Rummel still had not made a public decree concerning the date for integration, and now that public schools were integrated, the archbishop was running out of reasons to prolong the process.³⁶¹

The CCHR mounted a campaign to convince Rummel to declare a date. Several supportive state officials and CCHR members assured the aging archbishop

³⁶¹Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995) 256-2576.

that they would make sure no state reprisals occurred in the wake of desegregation. Cabirac in particular, downplayed the possibility of a boycott. Although Rummel had suggested integrating only the first three grades, the council still pushed their eight-grade plan for desegregation. At a school board meeting in 1962, Archbishop Cody submitted a proposal recommending that Catholics in New Orleans begin desegregation procedures. While the CCHR recognized that it was this proposal from Cody that acted as the catalyst for Catholic parochial integration in New Orleans, they assumed responsibility for laying the groundwork for the passage of the proposal.³⁶² In March of that year, archbishop Rummel finally announced that all eight grades would integrate in the Fall. Rummel's decision was not only due to Cody's support of the council's eight-grade plan, but also was a consequence of Judge Skelly Wright's decision to integrate the first six grades (in public schools) that year as well. This would ultimately prevent white parents from taking their children out of Catholic schools and placing them in a public school that still had segregated classes above the first grade. In this period the church became more decisive in its actions.³⁶³

On March 27th 1962, Reverend Bezou, the superintendent of parochial schools, announced the order to desegregate all Catholic schools under the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The order to integrate affected approximately 116

³⁶²“Schedule End of Parochial Segregation,” *New Orleans States-Item*, March 28, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁶³ Report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, 1961-1962, 1-2, Box 1, Folder 2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

elementary and 37 high schools, and ten and half parishes: Washington, St. Tammany, St. John, St. Charles, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Terrebonne, Orleans, Jefferson, LaFourche, and part of St. Mary. Bezou asserted that all standards for admission would remain intact and that the only true restriction placed on black parents wanting to send their children to newly integrated Catholic schools was that they had to send them to a school within their own parish.³⁶⁴ The mandate to desegregate declared that “all Catholic children may apply for admission to the Catholic schools of the archdiocese, both elementary and secondary, parochial and private, according to accepted educational standards.”³⁶⁵ Superintendent Bezou seemed optimistic that Catholic integration would be successfully implemented, stating, “Catholics in many dioceses in recent months and years have accepted similar policies and regulations set by their bishops. As one who lived here all his life, I expect Catholics will show the same loyalties as have been shown in many other dioceses, including those in Southern states.” Bezou issued his support of the speedy integration of parochial schools at the start of the 1962-63 school term despite the opposition predicted to come out against the edict.³⁶⁶

While schools within the archdiocese of New Orleans continued their

³⁶⁴ “School Mixing Seen in Fall: Council Asserts Catholic Decision Made,” *Times-Picayune*, March 25, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Schedule End of Parochial Segregation,” *New Orleans States-Item*, March 28, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁶⁵ “Propose Statement of Policy with Regard to Desegregation of Catholic Elementary Grades,” 1962, 1-2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

contentious march toward desegregation, other regions in Louisiana continued to resist the *Brown* decision. In a March issue of the *States-Item*, the superintendent stated, “Catholic schools in Northern and Central Louisiana will not be desegregated.”³⁶⁷ Although some dioceses, such as Lafayette, did emphasize that integration in their dioceses was inevitable, they affirmed that they had no clear plans to desegregate in the upcoming school term.³⁶⁸ Baton Rouge also released a statement at the end of March that proclaimed, “B.R. Plans No Mixing Now.” Bishop Maurice Schexnayder of Lafayette stated, “I haven’t made up my mind that way yet,” but he did assert that, “it’s going to come.” Patrick Gillespie, chancellor of the Baton Rouge diocese, said that he could not say definitely when school would be integrated but he could not rule out the possibility of it happening that year.³⁶⁹

Meanwhile in the southern part of the state, the Louisiana’s Citizens Council responded in its own way to the desegregation order. The council called the “mixing ruling” tragic, because integration for them meant that, “white Catholic schools will gradually become predominantly Negro and New Orleans will emerge as a city of

³⁶⁷ “Lafayette Mix Due But Not This Year,” *New Orleans States-Item*, March 28, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “School Mix Ruled Out in LA Diocese,” *New Orleans States-Item*, March 29, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁶⁸ “Bishop Gives School Views: Lafayette Diocese Will Be Desegregated,” *Times-Picayune*, March 29, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁶⁹ “Bishop Tracey Says B.R. Plans No Mixing Now,” *New Orleans States-Item*, March 30, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center.

terror.”³⁷⁰ In April 1962, Archbishop Rummel excommunicated Jackson Ricau, the Executive Director of the South Louisiana Citizens’ Council; Leander H. Perez Sr., president of the Plaquemines Parish Council; and Mrs. B.J. Gaillot, president of Save Our Nation. These politically and socially prominent white Catholics had placed themselves in direct opposition to the Catholic Church’s implementation of the *Brown* decision. Excommunication, the denial of a sacred Catholic right to receive the church’s Holy sacraments and participate in the life of the church, is the ultimate punitive measure, which is at the discretion of Catholic archbishops. Evoked by archbishops globally as a last resort, the Vatican rarely overturns such decrees. Nonetheless, all three sought the support of the Vatican in overturning their excommunications, but to no avail. In their relentless struggle to maintain segregation in Catholic schools, Ricau, Perez, and Gaillot inadvertently became examples of the extent and effectiveness of Catholic moral law in lieu of state and federal law to enforce racial integration. While others in the church had also publicly opposed Rummel’s order, they ceased after the final verdict came down in March. Ricau,

³⁷⁰ “Mixing Ruling Called Tragic,” *Times-Picayune*, March 29, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Citizens’ Unit Hits Catholic Mixing Plan,” *New Orleans States-Item*, March 29, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Integration Foe Releases Text of Letter to Prelate,” *Citizens’ Report* 4, no. 3, March 31, 1962, 1-2, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Hail Rummel’s Winning Cause,” *New York Herald Tribune*, April 8, 1962, 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Bishop Praises Stand by Archbishop Rummel,” April 8, 1962, 1A, 2A, Box 4, Folder 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

Perez, and Gaillot however, continued their public assault on the archbishop. In total, Rummel issued excommunication warnings to approximately ten Catholics who publicly voiced their opposition to his order; however, he only acted against those who continued to do so.³⁷¹

In an April edition of the *Times-Picayune*, Catholic representative Rodney Buras of the Seventh Ward stated that he planned to introduce a bill in the legislature that called for, “compulsory physical examinations of public and private school students when they apply for admission.” In the bill, “a child found with a contagious disease would be refused admission and only accepted after recovery.”³⁷² The legislation hinged on racial myths of black impurity and affliction. Buras’s bill reinforced these myths and ensured white parents that strict guidelines would be maintained during the process of school desegregation.

Despite the attacks from Catholics holding positions in state office, the archdiocese reported no sharp decline in registration, as ninety percent of parochial

³⁷¹ Southern Field Service report to the Directors of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, August, 1962, 9-11, Box 1, Folder 2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Letter, Rummel to Mrs. B.J. Gaillot, Leander Perez and Jackson Ricau, March 31, 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Jackson Ricau, “The Revealing Story of My Excommunication-An Act of Desperation By the Race Mixers,” *The Citizen*, April 1962, 1-9, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Three Catholic Segregation Leaders Excommunicated by Archbishop Rummel,” *Citizens’ Report* 4, no. 4, April 1962, 1-2. *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection, 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁷² “Wright’s Order,” *Times-Picayune*, April 8, 1962, Box 4, Folder 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

students registered in the first three days of a six-day registration period. The diocese stated that these figures indicated that, “attendance next year will be at least as high as in 1961-62.”³⁷³ Church officials stated that if the numbers continued to grow at this rate they would equal the record of enrollment of the previous year. The registration rates for both the grade and high schools remained stable in the first year of Catholic school integration. Church contributions also remained steady during desegregation efforts.³⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Ricau, Perez, and Gaillot took to the press hoping to garner public support to convince the Vatican to overturn the archbishop’s excommunication ruling. Rummel’s excommunication of the three segregationists proved to be a great deterrence to further public opposition.³⁷⁵

The CCHR had hoped that Skelly Wright would carry through with his promise to integrate the first six grades of all public schools the following month, but Wright was transferred to the Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia, and Frank

³⁷³ “Catholic Schools Register Quietly,” *New Orleans States-Item*, April 13, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁷⁴ “New Students Register Today,” *Times-Picayune*, April 13, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁷⁵ “Mrs. Gaillot Will Appeal Ruling to Rome,” *New Orleans States-Item*, April 16, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Rummel Order Move to Scare Parents-Perez,” *New Orleans States-Item*, April 16, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Mix Foe Kneels, Begg Blessing,” *New Orleans States-Item*, April 17, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Vatican Backs Archbishop in Excommunication,” *Times-Picayune*, April 18, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

B. Ellis, his replacement, limited integration to the first grade.³⁷⁶ However, aside from a few incidences, Catholic schools integrated without incident. Pro-segregationists Gaillot, Perez, and Ricau continued their public campaign against Catholic school integration but while they did gain supporters, few joined their public crusade against the archdiocese. Gaillot in particular gave several talks before a group called Friends of Catholic Children, an anti-integration group. Leander Perez organized a meeting of parents and at that meeting he called for boycott of all Catholic schools and warned white parents that if any of them allowed their children to attend the newly integrated schools they would face ostracism.³⁷⁷

On August 29th five black students integrated Our Lady, south of New Orleans. Papers reported no major interference by parents as the school's nuns and priests escorted both white and black children into the school. Both Leander Perez and Sam A. Moncla, superintendent of Plaquemines Parish, implored white parents to remove their children from the school. Moncla stated that there were enough segregated public schools for white Catholic students to attend. Plaquemines Parish officials cut off black access to parish school buses, denied state funding for new

³⁷⁶ Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1995), 259.

³⁷⁷ "Group Slates Mrs. Gaillot Perez Talks," *New Orleans States-Item*, April 24, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6 *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; "Perez Assails Church Stand," *Time-Picayune*, April 26, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; "Urge Catholics to Oppose School Integrating Order," *New Orleans States-Item*, April 26, 1962, Box 4, Folder 6, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1995), 259.

textbooks, and halted school lunch and milk funds. In the face of these actions, the archdiocese stepped in to provide transportation for students attending Catholic schools in the Plaquemines Parish. Archbishop Cody exclaimed that other such initiatives would be put in place to preserve other state funding. Cody became Apostolic Administrator on June 1, 1962 right before the convening of the historic Vatican II.³⁷⁸ Cody would now oversee the integration of Catholic Schools.

While the integration of Catholic schools under Cody took place without much fanfare, one incident did rock the small town of Buras. One Monday morning as parochial schools prepared for the start of a new academic year a blast ripped through Our Lady of Good Harbor in Buras, which fell within the limits of Plaquemine Parish. The blast destroyed a section of the school that officials had added on to absorb the projected hike in attendance as a result of integration. The bomb shattered windows and ripped out interior walls, which set fire to the roof of the school. Archbishop Cody spoke out against the attack on Our Lady of Good Harbor, exclaiming, "I am certain this vicious and cowardly attack does not reflect the general feeling of our people. It could have come only from a pocket of hatred and violence that has given rise to other deplorable incidences recently."³⁷⁹ The FBI's investigation

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 261.

³⁷⁹ "Church Pastor Looks Over Explosion Damage at Catholic School," *Times-Picayune*, August 28, 1962, Box 4, Folder 2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

into the bombing of Our Lady of Harbor School resulted in no arrests, and the school eventually reopened on September 2, 1962.³⁸⁰

Both the *States-Item* and the *Times-Picayune* followed the story closely as black children continued to desegregate elementary and secondary schools within the archdiocese.³⁸¹ At this point, all Louisiana public schools outside of New Orleans were integrated at every level. Public and parochial schools however, had achieved only token integration by this point. Although public opposition to integration had died down a bit, there were still covert forms of resistance to integration. For example, St. Maurice's pastor maintained that he had no room to admit black students. Along the same lines, in some of the integrated schools, parish societies refused to accept blacks, and parent groups opted to cancel all social activities. Ellis Henican relayed to Cody that, "by and large, the white parents have accepted desegregation reluctantly and are forbidding their children to become too friendly with the Negro children."³⁸²

³⁸⁰ "Buras School Closed, Rob Kennedy Orders Probe: Numerous Threats Cited by Pastor," *New Orleans States-Item*, August 31, 1962, Box 4, Folder 2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; "Negro Children Fail to Appear," *The Times-Picayune*, August 31, 1962, Box 4, Folder 3, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁸¹ "Buras Classes Renew Tuesday," *New Orleans States-Item*, September 2, 1962, Box 4, Folder 3, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁸² "26th Catholic School Here Quietly Mixed," *New Orleans States-Item*, September 6 1962, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; "Archbishop Cody backs Catholic Council," *Catholic Council on Human Relations Bulletin* 1, no.5, November 1962, 1-2, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

As the danger of school closing and oppositionist bills subsided, the Louisiana Citizens' Council decreased in influence. However, it did appear at one point that the state would strike out against desegregation once again through a policy of tuition grants. Over 4,000 parents in the city's most elite private schools, as well as those in public schools in the process of integrating, were projected to ask for tuition grants under the "freedom of choice" plan. The freedom of choice plan allowed white parents to apply for state funded tuition grants to attend segregated private schools. In fact, between 1962 and 1963, over 7,000 white children obtained tuition grants; these grants, however, had minimal impact.³⁸³ The refusal of voters to fund a complete system of state aid to private schools led to the ultimate demise of the legislation.

In 1963, under increasing pressure from the federal government, the Orleans Parish School Board finally submitted a plan for desegregation. They had accepted token integration thus far, agreeing to integrate gradually one grade at a time. Even at this point, pro-segregation members of the board fought over every detail. The federal courts eventually pressured the board to abolish the pupil placement law, end racial zoning, and expand integration to all grades. Tulane opened its doors to black students in February of 1963. The board however delayed the process in the courts, and as a result, by the 1964 school year only 809 black children attended thirty-one formerly all white public schools.³⁸⁴ Segregated private schools, however, remained

³⁸³ PAR Analysis, "Louisiana's Grant-In-Aid Program," 1964, 1, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁸⁴ Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1995), 262-263.

open and continued to accept white children fleeing integrated schools. Henry Cabirac and C. Ellis Henican brought suit against the Louisiana Grant-in-Aid Program, a program that provided tuition grants for white students to attend segregated private schools. In 1967, after a long battle in the courts, federal judges abolished Louisiana's Grants-in-Aid program.³⁸⁵

As a result of the inequalities pervasive in the parochial school integration, the Catholic Church closed several black schools in place of white ones. Having only achieved token integration, African Americans in this period continued to challenge the Catholic Church's shortcomings to combat racism and racial discrimination in archdiocesan facilities. The Vatican II decision, which called for more church involvement in world issues and an inclusion of different cultures in church liturgy, allowed black Catholics to have more of a voice in the church.³⁸⁶ The next chapter will examine the church as a global force in the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees after the fall of Saigon in 1975. In this period, the Catholic Church continued to use Catholic interracial activism and doctrine to control the reception of Vietnamese in a predominantly African American New Orleans East. The Church, however, failed to take stock of the economic impact that Vietnamese resettlement would have on the already struggling black community in New Orleans East. As a result, African

³⁸⁵ Henry Cabirac to Charles Wittenstein, Grant & Aid, April 7, 1964, *Catholic Council on Human Relations Records, 1955-1969*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁸⁶ *Louisiana in Black & White: New Interpretations of Twentieth-Century Race and Race Relations*, ed. Michael S. Martin (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011), 50.

Americans would argue for more inclusion in the process of Vietnamese resettlement and more representation at the highest levels of the Church.

Chapter 3

The Associated Catholic Charities and the Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in New Orleans East

Initially, the Catholic Church supported the American war effort in Vietnam due to its aversion to communism, but by the mid-1960s, Catholics began to question the moral consequences of the war. As the war progressed, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops passed a motion that supported a rapid end to America's involvement in the war. As the Catholic Church contended with the intensification of the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and mid-1970s, the institution also had to confront continued black Catholic unrest in response to the Church's wavering commitment to racial equality. This period also saw the rhetoric of Black Power politics awakening black Catholic consciousness. Black Catholics who believed they could effect change from within the church remained a part of the institution, but they began to articulate a more radical approach to Catholic interracial organizing.

Black Catholic activism in the late 1970s turned away from Catholic interracialism as the main method of affecting racial change in the Church and larger society. They now argued for black self-determination much like Thomas Wyatt Turner had done in the early twentieth century. The failure of the Associated Catholic Charities resettlement of Vietnamese refugees signaled the decline of Catholic interracialism as the emergence of black Catholic organizations. The Church's failure to mediate the reception of the Vietnamese as well as the unintended privileging of the Vietnamese in the dispersal of housing and jobs reinvigorated a black Catholic

movement, which prior to the late 1970s had been dormant. Reinvigorated by the Black Power movement, these black Catholic organizations now provided black Catholics with a voice to argue for an increase in the number of black priests and the acceptance of a black Catholic liturgy. As black Catholics joined secular organizations, black Catholic leaders emerged that could argue for access to better housing and jobs. This orientation often put black Catholics at odds with government efforts to resettle Vietnamese refugees, although there were also moments of interracial cooperation amidst this conflict that anticipated more successful collaborations in the 21st century.

After the fall of Saigon in 1975, President Gerald Ford initiated the evacuation and relocation of 130,000 South Vietnamese, many of whom settled in Catholic New Orleans. In the ensuing years, the U.S. Catholic Church would play an integral role in the Vietnamese relocation and resettlement effort.³⁸⁷ Although members of the Vietnamese diaspora who eventually settled in New Orleans by way of the Associated Catholic Charities (ACC) were predominantly Catholic, historically, black and Vietnamese experiences with the Catholic Church had been wholly different.

Many Vietnamese understood the church as a charitable religious organization; whereas, black Catholics viewed the church as an imperfect institution that was still dealing with its own religious hypocrisies in the realm of Catholic racial justice. In the beginning of May, 1975, tens of thousands of Buddhist, Catholic,

³⁸⁷ Joseph G. Morgan, "A Change of Course: American Catholics, Anti-Communism and the Vietnam War," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 123-124.

Protestant, and other Vietnamese refugees immigrated to the US. Buddhists and Catholics, however, were the two religions groups with the highest representation among the refugees. This fact would become important during the sponsorship and placement process.³⁸⁸ ACC, a wing of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, prepared to resettle a projected 2,100 Vietnamese refugees in New Orleans.³⁸⁹ However, the ACC did not anticipate the social and economic impact of relocating the Vietnamese to the city given black New Orleanians' poor access to housing and a high rate of unemployment.³⁹⁰ The initial estimate of Vietnamese refugees resettling in New Orleans was supposed to top out at 2,000, but by the close of the program in 1978, more than 9,000 Vietnamese called New Orleans their home.

In 1975, The Public Issues Committee of Urban League of Greater New Orleans (ULGNO) conducted preliminary research on the economic impact of Vietnamese relocation on blacks in New Orleans East, which was a step the ACC had failed to take before agreeing to lead Vietnamese resettlement in New Orleans. The ULGNO was a secular organization that had opened its office doors in 1938 with the support of white moderates and liberals of various religious backgrounds. Rabbi Julian Feibelman, Rosa Keller, Archbishop Joseph Rummel and others were early

³⁸⁸ Red Cross Public Information Office Daily Statistics of Camp Pendleton, "Daily Arrival and Departures," June 9, 1975, 1, Box 2, Folder 8, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York.

³⁸⁹ Urban League of New Orleans: Employment in New Orleans, 1975-1978, 1-3, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

financial supporters of the ULGNO who also spoke out against false allegations of the organization's communist leanings. At its inception, the organization represented an interracial cadre of black and white community leaders. African Americans held prominent positions in the organization. Marshall Ballard became the first chairman of directors. Constant C. Dejoie served as vice chairman. Blanche Best and A.J Sarre served as secretary and assistant treasurer. Clarence A. Laws served as industrial secretary and would later become executive secretary of the ULGNO.³⁹¹

From the outset, the organization had clear connections to the Catholic Church in New Orleans. The committee's findings showed that the Church had underestimated the impact of Vietnamese resettlement on New Orleans' already dire housing and job markets. In the areas of housing and employment in the city, this impact was made glaringly clear by landlords who chose to displace blacks in exchange for housing Vietnamese refugees receiving government subsidies.³⁹² Black leaders spoke out against the ACC's poor planning and implementation of their Vietnamese relocation plan. Although the ACC did recognize the negative impact of unchecked Vietnamese relocation on preexisting black communities, they admitted

³⁹¹ Donald Devore, *Defying Jim Crow, African American Community Development and the Struggle for Racial Equality in New Orleans, 1900-1960*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2015), 119-120; Articles of Incorporation of the New Orleans Branch of the National Urban League, Inc., January 26, 1940, 1-4, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

³⁹² Urban League of Greater New Orleans, "Indo-China Refugee Issue: An Urban League Position Paper," May 25, 1978, 1-10, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

there was no foreseeable solution to the problem. Gene Tullier of the ACC stated, “Apart from putting people on reservations, I don’t know of any other way of dealing with the situation.”³⁹³

In an attempt to redirect the public’s attention from the possible impact of the Vietnamese relocation on blacks in New Orleans East, Father Michael Haddad, then head of the ACC, publicized alleged black threats and violence against the Vietnamese refugees of the city. He stated in reference to black-Vietnamese relations, “that some of the refugees—since the controversy developed—have been receiving threatening phone calls, they have been afraid to work at nights; they are afraid to send their kids to school.”³⁹⁴ These rumors became the basis of the ACC’s defense of its relocation program. It also had the added effect of exacerbating Vietnamese-black relations, pitting two already grossly marginalized groups against each other. The ACC’s poor planning and implementation of their Vietnamese relocation plan took center stage as black leaders demanded more of a say in Vietnamese relocation. On several occasions, Rev. Haddad refused to sit down with leaders of ULGNO and even after continued requests from ULGNO officials that Vietnamese bishops and leaders in the Vietnamese community be invited to the discussion, the ACC failed to extend the invitation. Although it may have been unintended and unforeseen, the ACC’s

³⁹³ Ibid., 1-10.

³⁹⁴ Ed Anderson, *Times-Picayune*, “Discussion Urged to End Refugee Rift,” May 1978, 1, Box 60, Folder 1, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience*, Eds. LaReine-Marie Mosely, Albert J. Raboteau and M. Shawn Copeland, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 82.

relocation of Vietnamese refugees from 1975-1978 had real economic consequences for black New Orleanians. The struggle over Vietnamese resettlement in New Orleans provided the space for a rearticulation of Catholic interracialism from a white/black binary model to one that included Catholics of different races and to a method and dogma that had to privilege the voices of not only blacks, but the voices of other nonwhite Catholics as well.³⁹⁵

In an era that called for rapid social change, Catholic interracial organizing, as envisioned by white Catholic moderates and liberals, had made moderate gains but had failed to address the institutional racism inherent in the Catholic Church. The legacies of the Civil Rights movement and the slogan Black Power spread so rapidly in the US in the late 1960s that no institution, not even the socially cautious Catholic Church, remained untouched by the phenomenon. One cannot understand the long history of Catholic interracial organizing in New Orleans without taking into consideration the black response to the method in this period. Driven by the self-determinative rhetoric of the Black Power movement and the human rights and third world rhetoric of the Vietnam era, Black Catholic organizations rearticulated Catholic interracial organizing to privilege black self-determination and leadership within the church as well as in the larger society. Publicly and in print, black Catholics began to demand a larger voice in church governing and increased representation at the administrative level of the institution. Also, they became more involved in secular

³⁹⁵ Sister M. Martin de Porres Grey, "The Church, Revolution and Black Catholics," *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 4, (December 1970): 20-26.

struggles for black equality.

During this period, some black priests and parishioners left the Catholic Church altogether, while others remained a part of the institution in the hopes they could help transform the church's racial proclivities from within. Meanwhile, the Vietnam war raged on, and once Vietnamese relocation to New Orleans became inevitable in the late 1970s, the Archdiocese of New Orleans saw the need to develop a Vietnamese Apostolate in the city. At the same time, nationally, black Catholics argued for church officials to pay more attention to its goals in the black Apostolate. In this period, black Catholic lay organizations, which were formed in the early 1970s, focused on tackling social issues they believed were detrimental to their communities and their place in the Catholic Church. In order to understand the trajectory of Catholic interracial organizing during this time, the various voices in which black people called for black self-determination in the era of the Vietnam War and the Black Power movement must be considered. The Vietnamese relocation efforts of the ACC provide the backdrop for the story of the rearticulation of Catholic interracialism in 1970s New Orleans and the struggle for black inclusion in not only the Church, but in society at large.

***Black Catholics and the Catholic Church: A Rearticulation of Interracial
Organizing (1968-1975)***

Reminiscent of Thomas Wyatt Turner's Federated Colored Catholics (FCC) of the 1930s, in the late 1960 and the early 1970s, many black Catholic laypeople and

clergy desired a movement and a national organization that “would reflect black goals and aspirations and that would be led by black clergy and laity.”³⁹⁶ Scholar Marilyn Wenzke Nickels argued that this new group of black Catholic activists had a new set of demands, which “reflected the passage of time since the Federation years.” These new demands included “the consecration of four regional black bishops, elected by their own black people, black pastorates, decision-making power for laymen in their parishes, an adequate liturgy, and the voice of black youth in Catholic organizations.”³⁹⁷ This transformation took place as a result of the Catholic Church’s lack of involvement in the Civil Rights movement. Although there were a few fearless laypeople and clergy who participated in the 1965 Selma march, the Catholic Church as a whole did not stand at the forefront of the movement alongside Protestants. Father Jerome LeDoux, black scholar and pastor of St. Augustine in the Tremé area of New Orleans from 1990-2006, asserted that the Church’s absence from the Civil Rights movement was one of the “most shameful scandals of modern Christianity.”³⁹⁸ At the time, clergy in the Catholic Church held the strong belief that as a religious entity, the Church needed to remain outside of secular unrest and resultant public demonstrations. This view changed after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. The black Catholic rearticulation of Catholic interracial

³⁹⁶ Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, C.T.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 141.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

³⁹⁸ M. Shawn Copeland, “African American Catholics and Black Theology: An Interpretation,” in *African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Gayraud Wilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 231.

organizing, which privileged black self-determination, took concrete form in the late 1960s when members of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus met secretly at the Catholic Clergy Conference on the Interracial Apostolate (CCIA).

Several days after King's assassination, roughly sixty Catholic priests met at the Catholic Clergy Conference on the Interracial Apostolate in Detroit. Father Herman Port of Rockford, Illinois extended an invitation to all black priests in the US. Cyprian Davis, a black clergy member and scholar, took part in the meeting and recalled that at the conference, black clergy confronted the issue of racism by dealing with the question of their own "personal and corporate responsibility in a time of racial crisis."³⁹⁹ Davis went on to state that "in order to determine such responsibility, the individual priests had to look at their respective sense of racial identity. For many, it was a time of painful discovery and sometimes bitter revelation. For all, it was a time of anger or of deep-seated unease."⁴⁰⁰

During the caucus, black clergy came to two conclusions; first they decided it was necessary to craft a statement to the American Catholic bishops that highlighted the urgency of the situation facing the black community, and second, they called for the formation of National Office for Black Catholics, "which would be totally independent from white authority."⁴⁰¹ In the declaration, the black caucus asserted

³⁹⁹ Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, C.T.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 143.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁰¹ Sister M. Martin de Porres Grey, "The Church, Revolution and Black Catholics," *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 4, (December 1970): 20-26.

that the Catholic church was “primarily a white racist institution.”⁴⁰² The statement, while strongly worded and aimed at the Catholic hierarchy, also conveyed an internal conflict in which black priests “were pulled between a real sense of loyalty to the church and a sense of responsibility to the black community in a time of struggle and increasing militancy.”⁴⁰³ Black priests made several demands, calling for black clerical representation in higher positions in their dioceses and communities. They also wanted the church to exert more efforts in recruiting black clerics and called for the creation of a special black led department, which would be an extension of the United States Catholic Conference, dedicated to the affairs of blacks.

In August of that same year, Patricia Grey Tyree, the only sister to attend the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus meeting in 1968, established the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The NBSC dedicated themselves to being “reborn into involvement in the liberation of black people as celibate, black and committed women.”⁴⁰⁴ Whereas most black priests and laypeople remained a part of church, even as they criticized its lack of action regarding race, others decided to leave the church. Tempered by opposition to the Vietnam War and a rise in black consciousness, some black priests chose to leave the priesthood in this period and quickly became participants in the secular struggles for black civil rights and human rights.

⁴⁰²Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, C.T.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 142-143.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 144.

⁴⁰⁴ Sister M. Martin de Porres Grey, “The Church, Revolution and Black Catholics,” *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 4, (December 1970): 23.

For example, Afro-Creole ex-priest, Tom Honore, who had left the priesthood in 1969, stated that towards the end of his tenure as a priest he became friends with a group of radical progressives who opposed the Vietnam War. He attended rallies and protests against the war with his group of friends, and he asserted that these “outside activities were not helping in my daily relationships with my Josephite Brothers.” He contended that, “in many subtle and frequent ways I could feel the alienation growing.” When Honore left the Josephites, he, like many of his fellow ex-priests, joined local black community and civil rights organizations.⁴⁰⁵

The southern branch of the Black Catholic Clergy Conference held its first meeting in New Orleans in January 12 and 13. According to *Citizens’ Report* editor, Jackson Ricau, the *Clarion Herald* reported that at the meeting, in a statement read by black Rev. Rawlin S.S.J. Newman, chaplain of Southern University in Baton Rouge at the time, the twenty five black Catholic priests rejected, “the current practice and trend toward ‘integration’ (solely according to white specifications), which is neither a present reality nor will be in the future until black Catholics have achieved self-determination.” Rev. August Thompson of Alexandria, Louisiana, who also attended the meeting, stated that the purpose of the black caucus was the “banding together of black priests to push the Church to do what it should do.” He went on to state that “Black power should lead to an economic and political power. This should be black power.” The priests argued that “there is still an attitude of superior and inferior, and

⁴⁰⁵ Tom Honore, *Grace at Every Turn: The Journey of an African a Creole into and Out of the Priesthood*, (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2004), 190.

integration must be achieved as a parity.” Although the right-wing *Citizens’ Report* deemed this discussion of black self-determination to be a movement led by “crafty white leftwing radicals or Communist conspirators,” their inclusion of black voices reveals the black rearticulation of Catholic interracial organizing.⁴⁰⁶

However, some black priests could see no reason to be part of a church that was unwilling to take a prominent stand against racial injustice, so they continued to leave the Josephite priesthood well into the early 1970s. Antoine M. Garibaldi, a black alum of St. Augustine High School in New Orleans and Professor at Xavier University, also became fed up with the Josephites’ complacency concerning racial justice in the Church and larger society; he left the Josephite brotherhood in the early 1970s. He credited the secular social activism of the early 1970s with initiating his exit from the priesthood. He asserted that this increase in social action, “caused me and many of my fellow seminarians to rethink our vocation as some of our views on the social movement in the African American community clashed with those of the Josephite hierarchy.”⁴⁰⁷ According to Garibaldi, some left of their own will, while others were forced out by the Josephite administration because of “perceived radicalism and unsuitability for the priesthood.”⁴⁰⁸

As a high school student, Antoine Garibaldi recalled that some of the more

⁴⁰⁶ Jackson G. Ricau, “Black Clerics Seek Black Power, Denounce White Clergy,” *The Citizens’ Report* 11, no. 9, January 1969, 1-2, Box 2, Folder 2, *Kim Lacy Rogers Collection 1959-1996*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁰⁷ Antoine Garibaldi, “Growing Up Black and Catholic in Louisiana,” in *Growing Up African American in Catholic Schools*, eds. Jacqueline Jordan Irvine and Michele Foster, (New York: Teacher College Press, 1996), 138.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

progressive white priests were “active in black community organizations such as ULGNO and the NAACP during the civil rights boycotts, protests, and demonstrations.”⁴⁰⁹ Thus, early connections had been made between representatives of the Catholic Church and black organizations like the ULGNO.

In 1971, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus established the Black Catholic Lay Caucus as an extension of the national organization, National Office for Black Catholics. The Black Catholic Lay Caucus’ primary motivation was the, “demand for black self-determination and lay leadership within the church.”⁴¹⁰ The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus and the Black Catholic Lay Caucus came together under the umbrella organization, the National Office of Black Catholics. Scholar Marvin Krier Mich argued that “the newly emerging national church organization[s] in the 1970s are evidence of the awakening and revolution underway within the black community.”⁴¹¹ He added, “The explosion of organizations reflected the creativity and sense of solidarity that was evident as African Americans continued to confront the racism that was part of their church and their society.”⁴¹² During the sixth annual black lay convention held in Los Angeles in 1975, California, black Catholics from across the country came together in spiritual reflection and dedicated themselves to “changing the old patronizing missionary attitude,” that they believed

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 135.

⁴¹⁰ Sister M. Martin de Porres Grey, “The Church, Revolution and Black Catholics,” *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 4, (December 1970): 23.

⁴¹¹ Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, C.T.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 146.

⁴¹² Ibid., 146.

“still persisted throughout much of the Catholic Church in America.”⁴¹³ Father Giles Conwill, one of the participants, proclaimed that it was now “time for us Black Catholics to stop being apologetic and start being Apostolic about who we are as Black Catholics and as Black people.”⁴¹⁴ The rhetoric at the meeting took on a subtle but noticeable Black Nationalist tone. Black Catholics were now willing to publicly defy the Church if they deemed their own actions were morally sound. In this period, the impulse toward a national black Catholic movement mirrored the 1930s attempts of Thomas Wyatt Turner’s FCC and their push for black self-determination.⁴¹⁵

Black Catholics wanted to focus on issues that had an impact on the black community as a whole, including black access to equal education, housing, and employment. At a 1975 meeting in Chicago of the boards of the National Office for Black Catholics, the National Black Lay Catholic Caucus, the National Black Sisters’ Conference, and the National Black Clergy Caucus, participants outlined several issues on their agenda for that year. *The Impact*, a newsletter published by the National Office for Black Catholics located in Washington DC, reported that “this meeting of National Black Catholic leadership represented efforts of the organizations to deal with issues that affect not only Black Catholics, but more inclusively, all

⁴¹³ James McNeil, “Black Catholic Lay Caucus,” *Freeing the Spirit*, December 1975, 7, *African Americans and the Roman Catholic Church, 1920s-Present*, Xavier University Archives and Special Collections, New Orleans, LA.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴¹⁵ Father Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroads, 1990), 164.

Black people in America today.”⁴¹⁶ Some of the issues brought forth at the meeting included, “The Economic Crisis in the Black Community,” “Criminal Justice and the Reform Movement,” “Political Trends and the Prospect for Blacks,” and “Current status of Catholic Education and its future for the Black Community.” Dr. Robert Hill addressed meeting attendees stating that this, “new thrust’ also offers the opportunity for Black Catholics to definitely relate ourselves to the real concerns of our people and to begin to move very effectively in a socially-oriented direction.”⁴¹⁷ ULGNO and other organizations at both the national and local levels participated in the discussions.

Black Access to Housing and Employment Prior to Vietnamese Resettlement

Prior to the Vietnamese resettlement in 1975, low-income black New Orleanians faced disproportionately dismal housing conditions compared to whites. ULGNO identified housing as the primary social problem facing the city.⁴¹⁸ At this time, blacks in the city endured overcrowding, high rental fees, and neighborhoods with inadequate environmental conditions. According to a 1960 census of housing conditions in New Orleans, despite a decrease in population and an increase in housing stock, the city still found itself in the middle of a housing crisis. For example,

⁴¹⁶ “Joint Board Meeting: Black Catholics Address Social Issues,” *Impact* 5, no. 1 1975, 1, *African Americans and the Roman Catholic Church, 1920s-Present*, Xavier University Archives and Special Collections, New Orleans, LA.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁴¹⁸ Kent B. Germany, *New Orleans After the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship and the Search of the Great Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 32-33.

black families occupied 62,000 units in the city, 26,000 of which were deemed substandard. Overall, however, by this time, there were 50,660 substandard units in the entire city, which meant that African Americans occupied 14,660, or a little over half of the, substandard units despite the fact that they only inhabited 30% of all units.

The financial support necessary to confront the housing crisis was wholly inadequate.⁴¹⁹ By the 1970 census, the number of empty housing units had increased by 5,893 units, which was a result of middle-class white flight to the suburbs of Jefferson Parish. 2,234 of the 5,893 units added were public housing units meant to be utilized by low- and moderate-income families. As whites vacated properties in the city, the number of substandard units grew by more than 5,000 units. Despite the outward migration of whites, and a decrease in the population, blacks still comprised the highest number of those in need of housing assistance. Public housing units, which were consonant with low-income families, made up a little less than half of the new housing units added by 1970.⁴²⁰

As black working-class families and families on government assistance increased in the New Orleans East area, white flight gained momentum. Even though blacks occupied only 38.8% of occupied units, they encompassed 73.6% of the total overcrowded units, which exceeded that of whites. In addition, low-income blacks

⁴¹⁹ Urban League of New Orleans: Summary of the Analysis of Housing Conditions in New Orleans, 1960-1977, 1, Box 59, Folder 11, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴²⁰ "A Historical Analysis of Housing Conditions in New Orleans," Urban League of New Orleans, 1978, 1-8, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

who lived in these overcrowded units paid exorbitant rents. Roughly eighty percent of low-income renters paid twenty-five percent or more of their income to rent their dwellings. By 1975, 46,240 low-income renters required housing assistance under the Housing Assistance Plan (1975).⁴²¹

During this period, black residents also saw high levels of unemployment in New Orleans' economy. By 1970, black unemployment in the city averaged about seven percent, and by the close of that year, unemployment rates had increased by one percent. According to ULGNO, underemployment was also a problem. In the mid-1970s, the Department of Labor defined underemployment as "a person who is working part-time but seeking full-time work, and whose salary relative to his or her family size is below the poverty level." A 1966 study conducted by the Department of Labor evidenced this trend; it revealed that roughly ten percent of those employed part-time in New Orleans were in search of full-time work, which amounted to approximately four times the national average. Although the study had been done a decade prior to the ULGNO summation, the league believed the 1966 study revealed "how serious a problem this city had in not achieving maximum output from labor."⁴²²

The ULGNO cited the importation of workers from neighboring parishes as the third major problem blacks grappled with in this period. In 1970, a reported

⁴²¹ Ibid., 1-8.

⁴²² Urban League of New Orleans: Employment in New Orleans, 1975-1978, 1-3, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

36,632 jobs were filled by such workers. For example, “Orleans [Parish] supplied jobs for 46,930 Jefferson [Parish] residents,” which accounted for thirty percent of all workers living in Jefferson Parish at the time. In stark contrast, Jefferson supplied jobs for 20,232 Orleans residents, which amounted to 26,697 fewer jobs than Orleans supplied to Jefferson residents. ULGNO expected these trends to persist through 1981 primarily due to the predominance of, “a service type economy, which results in a lower wage structure and lower average growth in productivity.” In 1973, unemployment remained steady at eight percent but by 1974 had increased once more by one percent. “In 1974, 26.5% of employees were blacks, but only 5.4% of Officials/Managers were blacks; 4.17% of professional and 12% technicians were blacks.” By 1975 the unemployment rate had decreased by .4%.⁴²³ While the New Orleans housing and employment markets grew less stable in this period, Vietnamese refugees fleeing Communist takeover in the South arrived at four refugee camps in the United States.

The United States Catholic Conference and Vietnamese Refugee Camps

Vietnamese refugees entered a foreign land and were confronted with a US culture positing values and ethics often contrary to their own. Nevertheless, they were expected to conform to this culture, and their initial stay at four relocation camps began the process of Americanization. These four camps--Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Fort Indian Town Gap in Pennsylvania, and the Eglin Air Force Base in Florida--became processing stations for Vietnamese refugees

⁴²³ Ibid., 1-3.

over the course of the resettlement program.⁴²⁴

All of the refugee camps operated in the same manner. Refugees were examined, registered with American agencies, and interviewed extensively. While in these refugee camps, Vietnamese children attended English language classes, and camp officials held movie nights and supplied the Vietnamese with newspapers and other English reading materials. Vietnamese families experienced a 4th of July celebration for the first time, which featured a festive fireworks display, and they could partake in a number of recreational activities, most notably, baseball.⁴²⁵ The camps in essence “promoted the Vietnamese transformation from refugee to immigrant.”⁴²⁶ ‘Transition America classes’ ran at all of the camps; these classes were geared toward cultural orientation. The classes focused heavily on how to ensure financial security, and they taught the basic skills necessary for navigating the United States.

The Interagency Task Force (IATF), formed on April 18, 1975, consisted of twelve federal agencies under the departments of Justice and Labor, State Health, Education and Welfare, Urban Development, and Housing. The job of the task force

⁴²⁴ Office of the Commander, U.S. Army Garrison: History of Fort Indiantown Gap, 1975, 1-6, Box 4, Folder 5, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York; Gail Paradise Kelly, *From Vietnam to America: A Chronicle of Vietnamese Immigration to the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 61.

⁴²⁵ Interagency Task Force on Indochinese Refugees, “Processing of Refugees,” July 1975, 2, Box 4, Folder 5, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York.

⁴²⁶ Gail Paradise Kelly, *From Vietnam to America: A Chronicle of Vietnamese Immigration to the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 85-89.

was to, “coordinate . . . all U.S. government activities concerning evacuation of U.S. citizens, Vietnamese refugees and resettlement problems relating to the Vietnam conflict.”⁴²⁷ The IATF was responsible for devising policies for relocation. The group chose, what scholar Gail Paradise Kelly termed, a “policy of diaspora,” meaning, “resettlement was aimed at preventing large clusters of Vietnamese, Cambodians, or Laotians from building up in any given area in the country.”⁴²⁸ From Washington, the IATF facilitated the placement of Vietnamese refugees with voluntary agencies, which would then find local organizations or individuals willing to assume financial responsibility for the Vietnamese for two years. They also kept extensive logs of Vietnamese arrivals. The agencies received a \$500 resettlement grant for each refugee and controlled how the money was spent. Agencies that took on this responsibility included the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), Travelers’ Aid-International Social Services, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), as well as several others.⁴²⁹ Out of these agencies, the USCC played a prominent role in the resettlement effort because those Vietnamese that fled Vietnam after its fall were significantly Catholic.⁴³⁰ In this period, the USCC functioned as the primary

⁴²⁷ Interagency Task Force on Indochinese Refugees, “The Indochinese Refugees Program: Question and Answers,” July 1975, 1-8, Box 4, Folder 5, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

⁴²⁹ Gail Paradise Kelly, *From Vietnam to America: A Chronicle of the Vietnamese Immigration to the United States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), 67-68.

⁴³⁰ Interagency Task Force on Indochinese Refugees, “The Indochinese Refugees Program: Question and Answers,” July 1975, 1-8, Box 4, Folder 5, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York; Interagency Task Force on Indochinese Refugees,

organization providing assistance to local Catholic agencies in the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees throughout the US.⁴³¹ . Inevitably, given that the nongovernmental agencies helping them financially were located in urban spaces, this made the IATF's initial policy of Vietnamese relocation was difficult to implement, and large concentrations of Vietnamese refugees became a reality in cities like New Orleans.⁴³²

A Place to Call Home: The Associated Catholic Charities and Vietnamese Resettlement

In April of 1975, Archbishop Philip Hannan, accompanied by Father Michael Haddad, the head of the Associated Catholic Charities (ACC) of New Orleans, visited the Vietnamese resettlement camps at Fort Chafee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida and Indian Gap in Pennsylvania. Their visits to these camps were intended to “give the Vietnamese religious community a voice in where they will start their new life in the Catholic Church in the United States.”⁴³³ Hannan invited 1,000 Vietnamese to move to New Orleans.⁴³⁴ Locally, in May of that year, the ACC

“Information for Sponsors of Indochinese Refugees,” July 1975, 1-2, Box 4, Folder 5, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York.

⁴³¹ Douglas, R. Beane, “Understanding the Refugees from Vietnam,” [July 1975], Box 4, Folder 5, *Vietnamese Immigration Collection, 1975-1976*, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York.

⁴³² Gail Paradise Kelly, *From Vietnam to America: A Chronicle of the Vietnamese Immigration to the United States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), 156.

⁴³³ “Program Aids Viet Relocation,” *Clarion Herald*, June 19, 1975, 5, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁴³⁴ *A Village Called Versailles*. Film. Directed by S. Leo Chiang, USA, Walking Iris Films, 2009.

became the primary sponsor in resettling Vietnamese refugees in the New Orleans area. For the Vietnamese, New Orleans seemed like an ideal location because it resembled home in some ways, given its subtropical temperature, its proximity to water and its access to a fishing economy.

On a Monday in May 1975, nineteen refugees arrived in New Orleans. The Catholic Church's *Clarion Herald* featured an article entitled, "Viets Trade Worlds," which discussed their recent arrival. The Church reported that upon the arrival of the Vietnamese, 200 Catholics had already offered to serve as sponsors for Vietnamese resettlement in the city.⁴³⁵ That year in an interview, Father Haddad was asked what the determining factor would be in deciding how many Vietnamese refugees would come to New Orleans. He replied, "It's going to be the response of the New Orleans community to help in getting the individual refugee or individual refugee family settled in the area. It might mean providing temporary housing or helping that family locate housing. It might mean someone who can offer a job." After his visit to Fort Chaffee, Archbishop Hannan asked Haddad and the ACC to locate low-income subsidized housing that could accommodate large Vietnamese families. Located on the far eastern side of New Orleans, the Versailles Arms apartments were thought to be the best option. Throughout the initial resettlement, the Archdiocese of New Orleans sought to strengthen its relationship with the incoming Vietnamese

⁴³⁵ Joseph Trung Vuong, "History of Vietnam," undated, 1-9, Box 1, *Joseph T. Vuong Papers, 1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Joseph T. Vuong, "Vietnamese Cross-Cultural Adjustment, undated, 1-6, Box 1, *Joseph T. Vuong Papers, 1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

community, raise money for their resettlement, and find members among the Catholic community who were willing to sponsor the Vietnamese.⁴³⁶

In June of that year, Archbishop Hannan announced that a special collection “would be taken up in all Catholic churches of the New Orleans archdiocese,” between July 10 and July 20 to, “benefit the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees.” Hannan asserted that because the federal government provided only limited funds for the resettlement, Vietnamese refugees who fled Vietnam with little to no possessions would be dependent upon “the charity of the Christian community for the basic necessities of life until such times as they are employed and can become self-supporting citizens.” He urged, “Let us not forget the charity of our Catholic people who, through their contributions of funds and goods assisted tens of thousands of Cuban refugees to resettle in our archdiocese.”⁴³⁷

The early development of a Vietnamese Apostolate played a critical role in the Vietnamese adjustment and resettlement in New Orleans. Prior to the arrival of the first nineteen Vietnamese to New Orleans, Bishop Robert E. Tracey of the USCC developed a relocation plan that would lay the groundwork for the quick development of a Vietnamese Apostolate across the US. When relocating the Vietnamese, Tracey decided to keep the “hundreds of Vietnamese priests, religious practitioners, and

⁴³⁶ *A Village Called Versailles*. Film. Directed by S. Leo Chiang, USA, Walking Iris Films, 2009.

⁴³⁷ “Program Aids Viet Relocation,” *Clarion Herald*, June 19, 1975, 5, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

seminarians who came with the refugees”⁴³⁸ and acted as their spiritual advisors while in the refugee camps, together.⁴³⁹ Bishop Tracey and Bishop Eugene Murray met with the Vietnamese priests, seminarians, and the USCC staff at the refugee camps in order to determine “the needs of the priests and religious before the religious resettlement effort begins.”⁴⁴⁰ Bishop Murray cited the reason for the meeting was to “give the Vietnamese religious community a voice in where they will start their new life in the Catholic Church in the United States.”⁴⁴¹ In the summer of 1975, the first Vietnamese priests to arrive in New Orleans from the refugee camps were Nguyen Duc Viet-Chau, Father Tran Cong Nghi and Father Andrew Tran Cao Tuong. Their primary goal was to care for the incoming Vietnamese refugees. Soon after their arrival, Archbishop Hannan appointed Father Nghi, who had ministered to the Vietnamese while at Fort Chaffee, director of the Vietnamese Apostolate. Fathers Chau and Tuong provided spiritual support for Vietnamese settling in the West Bank, while Father Tuong cared for those in the East Bank.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ “Viet Thanks Sound Same,” *Clarion Herald*, June 19, 1975, 1, *Clarion Herald*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “Bishop’s Meet with President,” *Clarion Herald*, June 19, 1975, 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “Special Viet Collection Set,” *Clarion Herald*, July 17, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “WJ Churches aiding Vietnamese,” *Clarion Herald*, July 17, 1975, 3, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁴³⁹ Florence Herman, “Seminarians from Vietnam Come to New Orleans,” *Clarion Herald*, July 31, 1975, 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁴² Father Viet Chau, Father Bac-Hai, Mr. Toan Tran, Mrs Cuong, and Mrs. Nguyet “History of Vietnamese Immigration to New Orleans,” *Clarion Herald*, July 1, 2014,

Rev. C.J. McNapsy also visited the Fort Chaffee camp in the summer of 1975 to film a documentary about the Vietnamese refugees and the process of sponsorship. He revisited his trip in an article published later that year in December. McNapsy reported that upon his arrival to the refugee camp, the Vietnamese received him with open arms. He found that at Fort Chaffee, the term “‘New Orleans’ is in high benediction.” According to McNapsy, the Vietnamese held Father Michael Haddad of the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and Father Brian Highfill, director of the New Orleans archdiocesan radio and television apostolate, in high regard. Highfill was the first manager of the USCC’s FM radio station, a bilingual radio station on the Fort Chaffee base and had played a vital role in the resettlement of Vietnamese in New Orleans. In the article, McNapsy recounted a portion of Vietnamese priest Father Dominic Luong’s sermon in which he discussed the meaning of a statue that the Vietnamese held in high regard. In Luong’s account of the story behind of statue, he said that towards the end of the war, he had returned home to take care of his mother and that as the war intensified in Vietnam, a woman named Mrs. Luong Tha Hoa, who owned the ancient statue, tried to ensure its survival during the evacuation process but died during the chaotic move. Her children picked up where she left off by transporting the statue with them to the US. Our Lady Queen of the Refugees lived on the Fort Chaffee base until resettlement began. The Vietnamese elected to move the statue once more to New Orleans when Archbishop

<https://clarionherald.org/2014/07/01/history-of-vietnamese-immigration-to-new-orleans/>

Hannan offered them a place to resettle, a place to call home. By the time parishioners read about the journey of McNapsy to the camps, throngs of laypeople in New Orleans had already agreed to sponsor the Vietnamese. McNapsy felt a great sense of pride that “New Orleans has a special place in their feeling.”⁴⁴³ Allowing the Vietnamese priests who ministered in the camps to travel with their congregations would allow for the quick development of a Vietnamese Apostolate in the cities where they settled. Thus, early on, Catholic officials from New Orleans, Vietnamese priests, and the ACC laid the groundwork for the rapid and successful development of a Vietnamese Apostolate in New Orleans.

The ACC, Vietnamese Adaptation, and a Sense of Place

After visiting Fort Chafee, Archbishop Hannan told the Catholic Charities to find low-income subsidized apartments that could accommodate large families. The Versailles Arms apartments on the eastern tip of New Orleans were the perfect option. A few weeks after Archbishop Hannan’s visit to Fort Chaffee, the first 200 Vietnamese families arrived in New Orleans. Half of the Vietnamese went to the Versailles Arms apartments in New Orleans East, while the other half went to the Kings Marrero apartments. Father Andrew Tuong supervised eleven families in route to the Versailles Arms apartments. In order to continue to minister to the community, Father Tuong arranged to use one of the rooms in the apartment complex for daily Mass. Having formed a lasting bond with the Vietnamese living in the Versailles

⁴⁴³ Rev. CJ McNapsy, “Madonna of Viets: Remarkable,” *Clarion Herald*, December 11, 1975, 12, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

Arms, shortly after Tuong's arrival, Archbishop Hannan appointed Father Tuong the first administrator of the Versailles Vietnamese community. In this way, the Archdiocese of New Orleans and its officials became a key actor in Vietnamese resettlement in New Orleans and the one consistent link between the newly arriving refugee community and the city's residents. When long-time resident Ngo Minh Khang first settled in the Versailles Arms neighborhood, he said that "there were few Americans,"⁴⁴⁴ in the area. Those Vietnamese who settled in the New Orleans East were all from two fishing villages back in Vietnam; they lived together at Fort Chaffee and now all occupied the same neighborhood.

By 1976, the *Clarion Herald* reported that the Vietnamese were beginning to adapt and thrive in New Orleans. Culturally, the Vietnamese practiced many of the rituals from the old country, such as the Full Moon festival, which is equivalent to our Halloween.⁴⁴⁵ The Vietnamese also experienced some economic success in this period. Mary Thomas, director of the ACC Vietnamese Resettlement Program, stated, "we've placed an average of 60 to 70 Vietnamese per month in jobs." Employers, such as Ben Wolverton of the Cordage Company, a rope-making company in the city, stated that the Vietnamese were dedicated workers that rarely missed a day of work. Wolverton contended that "the turnover among our Vietnamese workers is virtually

⁴⁴⁴ Father Viet Chau, Father Bac-Hai, Mr. Toan Tran, Mrs Cuong, and Mrs. Nguyet "History of Vietnamese Immigration to New Orleans," *Clarion Herald*, July 1, 2014, <https://clarionherald.org/2014/07/01/history-of-vietnamese-immigration-to-new-orleans/>

⁴⁴⁵ "Full Moon Festival: Fun, Food and Friendly Faces," *Clarion Herald*, September 23, 1976, 14, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

nil.”⁴⁴⁶ New Orleans’ proximity to the Gulf provided the initial groups of Vietnamese resettling in the area the ability to work in an industry that they were already proficient in. Very little English was needed to participate in the fishing industry in the city. The Vietnamese pooled funds, bought boats, and began to make a living of the land.⁴⁴⁷ The ability of the predominantly white ACC, Vietnamese religious leaders, and the Vietnamese community to work together during the initial resettlement process, from 1975-1976, was a testament to the possibilities of Catholic interracial organizing, or what interracialist priest John LaFarge of the early 20th century, called interracial action. According to LaFarge, “interracial action is the effecting of interracial justice in the widest sense of the word.”⁴⁴⁸ While the ACC was able to provide a charitable response to Vietnamese resettlement, they were unable to mediate the Vietnamese reception into the community, and more specifically, were unprepared to combat the white race prejudice that arose as a result of Vietnamese inclusion. The ACC also failed to realize the economic impact that Vietnamese resettlement would have on pre-existing black communities in New Orleans East. African Americans in New Orleans East believed that the unequal distribution of low-income housing, and jobs to the Vietnamese left them economically disadvantaged.

The ACC, ULGNO, and Vietnamese Reception in New Orleans

⁴⁴⁶ George Gurtner, “Viets Find Place in Job Market,” *Clarion Herald*, November 11, 1976, *Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁴⁷ *A Village Called Versailles*. Film. Directed by S. Leo Chiang, USA, Walking Iris Films, 2009.

⁴⁴⁸ John LaFarge, *Interracial Justice* (New York: America Press, 1937), 172.

Daily, the Vietnamese experienced racial discrimination outside of their ethnic communities, and after enduring these injustices, they quickly returned to their safe havens where they could speak Vietnamese, eat familiar foods, and move about without garnering hate-filled glances. After a report on jobs for the Vietnamese was broadcast, a television commentator reported receiving crank calls demanding that the Vietnamese be sent back to their country and that people should not be asked to “waste their time finding them jobs.”⁴⁴⁹ Similarly, the acting President of Plaquemines Parish, Chalin Perez, who was the son of excommunicated segregationist leader Leander Perez, a staunch segregationist of the 1960s, threatened to arrest Vietnamese fisherman if they did not leave his parish. After receiving several complaints from white fisherman out of Plaquemines, Chalin Perez contended that the Vietnamese fishermen were hurting local white fishermen and more broadly their way of life in Plaquemines parish. Subsequently, Versailles became a place to take refuge from the world.⁴⁵⁰ Within their ethnic enclave, the Vietnamese community in New Orleans East found resolve in Catholicism. Father Dominic Luong and his fellow Vietnamese priests stated that because great need existed within the Vietnamese community, the biggest question the Vietnamese confronted in this period was, “how do we give our people a sense of community, a spiritual bond with

⁴⁴⁹ George Gurtner, “Viets Find Place in Job Market,” *Clarion Herald*, November 11, 1976, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁵⁰ *A Village Called Versailles*. Film. Directed by S. Leo Chiang, USA, Walking Iris Films, 2009.

each other.”⁴⁵¹ Luong and his priests sought to create a better climate among other ethnic groups, particularly those groups they shared neighborhoods and the Catholic religion with. The Vietnamese desired to instill a sense of the importance of religious study among its children. Vietnamese religious leaders asserted, “When you have a community based on faith, everything else comes naturally.”⁴⁵² Luong would soon be named director of the Vietnamese Apostolate.

Although ACC head, Michael Haddad understood that finding jobs and housing would be difficult for the Vietnamese entering the city, he had not considered the long-term impact of resettlement on New Orleans’ job and housing markets, which were already in peril. What may have added to the conflict that would ensue between the ACC and the ULGNO was the ACC’s underestimation of the number of Vietnamese that would eventually call New Orleans home. Father Haddad stated that while the number of Vietnamese in the New Orleans East area would increase over the next two years, he clarified that he was not saying “the number will double or anything like that. But it will grow. Along with that number of fiercely dedicated Catholics.”⁴⁵³ However, by the final months of ACC’s resettlement program in 1978, the number of Vietnamese in the city had in fact doubled. The original goal of the

⁴⁵¹ George Gurtner, “War Ravaged Vietnamese Find Peace in Religion,” *Clarion Herald*, November 15, 1976, 2, *Archives* of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2; “Viets are crossing English Bridge, *Clarion Herald*, November 18, 1976, 4, *Archives* of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “Viet Apostolate Director Named,” *Clarion Herald*, November 18, 1976, 3, *Archives* of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

ACC was to resettle roughly 2,000 Vietnamese in the New Orleans area, but resources would become overtaken when the numbers of Vietnamese seeking refuge in the city deviated from the ACC's initial projection.

In 1978, the final year of Vietnamese resettlement, ULGNO, an interracial cadre of community leaders, became concerned about the impact of Vietnamese relocation on the economy and housing markets in New Orleans. On May 9, for the first time, ULGNO, in conjunction with local black organizations sat down with Rev. Haddad in an, "attempt to examine the resettlement issue," and its impact on the pre-existing black community. At the meeting, black leaders charged the ACC with neglecting the "immediate and long term effects of Vietnamese relocation on education, jobs, and housing." Black leaders deemed the ACC's Vietnamese relocation plan "poorly planned and coordinated." At the meeting, the league made several recommendations for dealing with Vietnamese resettlement. The sixteen-point document primarily suggested that those in attendance create a city-wide committee, which would include members of local black organizations and the ACC. ULGNO demanded the Catholic social service group conduct studies on the effects of their relocation plan, as well as go on record in support of those displaced in housing and employment by Vietnamese relocation. The league asked the ACC to avoid "support or contract groups or individuals who utilize serious means to profit from government subsidies derived from employment or housing of Vietnamese as opposed to that of other minorities," a move that would effectively end displacement of, "persons already in existing homes and jobs." Included in their list of recommendations,

ULGNO requested that the ACC, “employ black Catholics in an appropriate proportion to the number of black Catholics in New Orleans.” Lastly, ULGNO recommended the Vietnamese community be invited to join the new committee so their opinions could be heard. Each of these recommendations, if accepted, would provide a space for the realization of Catholic interracialism as dogma and method. Haddad, however, left the meeting with no intention of participating on the joint committee proposed by black leaders and ULGNO.⁴⁵⁴

In a May 11 press release, ULGNO made clear their views on Vietnamese resettlement as well their commitment to creating a citywide committee to oversee the impact of the refugee program. This committee needed to “include the broadest cross-section of representation from neighborhoods and established institutions in the New Orleans community.” According to ULGNO, this representation should include, “the Vietnamese community, the Catholic Charities the City of New Orleans, and the black community.” The press release also confronted the framing of the confrontation by local media outlets. They called for an end to press engagement in “sensationalism and even demagoguery.” The media’s reading of the conflict painted a fictitious rift between blacks and Vietnamese in the city, which Clarence Barney, the executive directors of the ULGNO, contended did not exist. Barney asserted in that May 11 press release that, “this was not a ‘Black vs. Vietnamese problem.’” Blacks had typically, “welcomed the Vietnamese into their neighborhoods and communities,

⁴⁵⁴ Urban League Recommendations,” May 9, 1978, 1-13, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center.

indicating a willingness to share already scarce resources.”⁴⁵⁵ Barney believed that, since the ULGNO press release on May 11, the *Clarion Herald*, *Times-Picayune*, and the *States-Item*, had distorted the league’s position. These headlines read, “Attack on Charities is Unjustified, Unfortunate,” and “Urban League Wrong,” and “Discussion Urged to End Refugee Rift.”⁴⁵⁶ While the media continued to escalate the conflict, the Urban League remained silent, but by the end of May, Barney felt the need to discuss the matter with Mayor Ernest N. Morial in a letter with materials enclosed, which included the Urban League Position Paper on the Indo-China Refugee Issue, along with a list of recommendations generated from that the meeting on May 9 with Haddad, the ACC, and other community leaders. Barney declared that concern over the Vietnamese resettlement program “was an issue raised not to pit one minority

⁴⁵⁵ Press Release, ULGNO For Immediate Release, May 11, 1978, 2, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center.

⁴⁵⁶ Millie Ball, “League Joins in Refugee Attack, *Times-Picayune*, May 12, 1978, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Urban League Wrong,” *New Orleans States-Item*, May 15, 1978, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Readers Forum: Urban League Stand ‘Dismays’ Catholic Group, *New Orleans States-Item*, May 18, 1978, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Urban League Asks Stoppage of Resettlement,” *New Orleans States-Item*, May 18, 1978, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Attack on Charities Unjustified, Unfortunate, *Clarion Herald*, May 18, 1978, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; “Managing Viet ‘Crisis, *Times-Picayune*, May 18, 1978, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans LA; Derrick Johnson, “Urban League Calls for Halt of Refugee Project,” *New Orleans States-Item*, May 19, 1978, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

against another, but to confront the unwholesome facts of the New Orleans economy, a situation that had always unfortunately remained buried beneath the confusion of race and religion.”⁴⁵⁷ In fact, Barney stated that ULGNO’s position was that “the plight of the Vietnamese refugees, though derived from different circumstances, is like the black struggle, complicated by similar backgrounds of relocation and suffering.”⁴⁵⁸

Vietnamese Resettlement, Employment, Housing, and the Failure of Catholic Interracial Action

ULGNO’s position paper noted “numerous complaints of policy violations at the national and local levels of the relocation program.”⁴⁵⁹ ULGNO’s report asserted that “the absence of sufficient jobs in an area with a 7.6% unemployment rate exacerbated the condition of those inhabitants already frustrated by their inability to maintain a minimal standard of living.” According to their position paper, layoffs among blacks increased during Vietnamese resettlement. For example, after 120 employees went on strike at Wembly Ties, managers hired Vietnamese refugees to replace them. The league also pointed to Schwegmann’s decision to hire huge numbers of Vietnamese to the exclusion of others as evidence of preferential treatment toward the Vietnamese.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ Urban League of Greater New Orleans, “Indo-China Refugee Issue: An Urban League Position Paper,” May 25, 1978, 7, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

The ACC and archdiocese of New Orleans failed to promote the integration of the Vietnamese into the city's existing communities. ULGNO contended that the ACC could not avoid the repercussion[s]:

of such advanced affirmative action on the efforts of other minorities, especially blacks, whose own adversities have never elicited such a response, whose own needs are being ignored and whose inequities are aggravated by the direct action to help one minority at the expense of all others.”⁴⁶¹

This statement highlights the failure of Catholic interracial organizing because once again, all voices, all persons involved, did not hold equal weight. Clearly blacks who were affected by the ACC relocation program were attempting to convey the harsh reality of the resettlement plan's impact on the employment and housing opportunities in their community. To explain the series of events, ULGNO pointed to an implicit preference for Vietnamese in housing and employment practices.

Although Father Dominic Luong had hoped to establish good relations with other ethnic communities in the area, Barney argued that, “instead of becoming part of existing communities, the refugees were encouraged by ACC policies to form homogenous neighborhoods, turned inward and apart from the larger communities.”⁴⁶² Entire housing complexes in New Orleans East “were quietly turned over for the accommodation of refugees.”⁴⁶³ Housing wait lists were now ignored, as landlords realized the subsidies they could claim if they only rented to Vietnamese

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 7.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 4; Letter, Clarence Barney to Ernest Morial. May 25, 1978, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

refugees. Black tenants issued reports of rent increases and evictions as a result of Vietnamese resettlement. In June of that year, the league requested occupant reports for the Versailles Arms I and II complexes.⁴⁶⁴

The Versailles Arms occupancy reports attest to the increase of Vietnamese refugees and the subsequent decrease of black families living in the complexes. For example, from 1975 to 1978, the increase in the number of Vietnamese refugees in Versailles Arms I versus black residents was substantial. While only one Vietnamese family lived in Versailles Arms I in 1975, by 1978, 136 Vietnamese families now called Versailles Arms I home. In 1976, the number of black families in the housing complex started to decline, which continued into 1978, dropping at the rate of seven families per year during that period. Similarly, a Versailles Arms II complex occupancy report reflected the displacement of 123 black families and an increase of 86 Vietnamese families. By this point, the ACC had acknowledged the resettlement of 700 Vietnamese families in the Versailles housing complexes, but the ULGNO could only account for 250 of those families. The placement of the remaining 500 Vietnamese families remained a mystery. Housing and employment deprivation among black residents continued in 1978. The disproportionate displacement of black families persisted, and overall, 149 low-income renter families were displaced by Vietnamese relocation. Between 1975-1978, Vietnamese gained 221 housing units in

⁴⁶⁴ Letter, Betty Smith to Clarence L. Barney. June 7, 1978, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Memorandum, Rose W. Butler to Robert Jones, June 12, 1978, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

Versailles I, II, and the Walnut complexes. The SCLC helped displaced black residents file claims of racial discrimination with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Twenty-four residents who made complaints were from the Versailles Arms area alone. In fact, Milton L. Scott, head of the Equal Opportunity Office of HUD, “verified that the complaints had been filed.” Although the Vietnamese refugees settled in other communities outside of Orleans Parish, by 1978, the majority of the refugees lived in Versailles in Orleans Parish. Roughly 2,063 lived in this section of the city, whereas another 1,851 were scattered across Bridge City-Jefferson Parish, Marrero, Harvey, Gretna-Jefferson Parish and Woodlawn and Algiers communities. The average family size was six people, and among the 3914 Vietnamese who settled in these areas, 2485 were children; these children were under the legal working age.⁴⁶⁵

ULGNO asserted that its intention in compiling statistics on the impact of the ACC’s Vietnamese resettlement program was not to create conflict between the Vietnamese refugees and the black community, but rather to, “uncover the maze of secrecy and exclusion that surrounds the total operation of the resettlement program.” The league had attempted to “penetrate this sacred domain,” but their attempts had been rebuffed. The misrepresentation and misinterpretation of their motives had

⁴⁶⁵ Urban League of Greater New Orleans: Indo-Chinese Population in New Orleans Metro Area Based on School Records, Table III & IV, August 1978, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.; Urban League of Greater New Orleans: A Historical Analysis of Housing Conditions in New Orleans, 1978, 8, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

functioned to conceal their true mission: to enhance the, “opportunities for minorities and the disadvantaged and to provide a voice for the voiceless.”⁴⁶⁶ The organization did not want to detract from the assistance the Vietnamese were receiving from the ACC and other agencies, they only sought to ensure that the, “same agencies who have so efficiently eased the misery of hundreds of war torn Vietnamese immigrants broaden their scope and aid those whose own struggle is no less tragic and whose own lives are no less distressed.”⁴⁶⁷

This period reflected the growing tide of black activism taking place around the country and the growing disillusionment of blacks with state and local agencies in the city. Many of ULGNO’s projects had in fact assisted the Vietnamese during resettlement; the organization had helped the Vietnamese find jobs through programs that already existed prior to resettlement. Despite the fact that the league’s results could be misperceived as a black attack on the Vietnamese community, the impact of the resettlement program, particularly the figures, explicitly convey the impact of the ACC’s resettlement program on preexisting marginalized communities and highlights how the ACC and governmental agencies routinely dismissed black and poor voices in the matter. In this period, the unemployment rate disproportionately impacted blacks in the city. By 1978, it had already increased to nine-point seven percent and

⁴⁶⁶ Urban League of Greater New Orleans: Indo-Chinese Population in New Orleans Metro Area Based on School Records, Table III & IV, August 1978, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁶⁷ Sharon Stockard Martin, Director of Public Affairs, Urban League of Greater New Orleans: Statistical Report, undated. *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

the league asserted that the expected rise in unemployment would go even higher for African Americans in the following years. Unemployment still affected nonwhites at a higher rate than whites, although poor whites were also subject to low employment rates. The league's report argued, "the unemployment rate for nonwhites," was "expected to exceed twelve percent (12.8%)," over the next few years.⁴⁶⁸

By August of that year, the ACC's goal for the Vietnamese had changed from one of resettlement and assistance to one focused on helping the Vietnamese community attain self-sufficiency. The archdiocese completed the building of the Vietnamese Martyrs Chapel and a month later Archbishop Hannan blessed and dedicated the chapel. By now, the community had increased to 3,000 Vietnamese. As the Vietnamese became more economically savvy, many purchased small businesses, such as grocery stores and restaurants.⁴⁶⁹ Mayor Ernest Morial, the first black mayor of New Orleans, authorized a task force made up of representatives from all concerned agencies willing to provide staff. Sixteen members, affiliated with various organizations made up the mayor's task force or what was also referred to as the Resettlement Committee. Of the sixteen members of the committee, only one represented ULGNO, in comparison to three who represented the ACC: Rose Butler

⁴⁶⁸ Urban League of Greater New Orleans: Employment in Orleans Parish, 1975-1978,

1975-1978, 2, Box 60, Folder 3, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁶⁹ Father Viet Chau, Father Bac-Hai, Mr. Toan Tran, Mrs Cuong, and Mrs. Nguyet "History of Vietnamese Immigration to New Orleans," *Clarion Herald*, July 1, 2014, <https://clarionherald.org/2014/07/01/history-of-vietnamese-immigration-to-new-orleans/>

represented ULGNO, whereas Rev. Dominic Luong, Sharon Rodi and Thomas Perkins were of the ACC. Rev. Dominic Luong was the only Vietnamese representative present despite the ULGNO's request that Vietnamese be asked to the table. Under the direction of University of New Orleans Professors Vincent Maruggi and Dr. Wade R. Ragas, each committee member focused on collecting data from government and state agencies, ironically the same agencies ULGNO had referenced in their report of May 25. After compiling their results, the committee planned to present its findings at the second general meeting of the Indo-Chinese Resettlement Working Committee meeting scheduled for October 5, 1978.⁴⁷⁰ Although by the time of this meeting, Fr. Dominic Luong, now a part of the ACC, had not completed a detailed report on the Vietnamese, he had compiled some initial findings. According to Fr. Luong's findings, Vietnamese refugees needed jobs, vocational training, and housing. Luong spoke of families forced to live in crowded conditions and insisted there was a lack of sizable family units in the city to house large Vietnamese families. He repeated and expanded his findings in his draft report, which he presented several days later in another committee meeting. He spoke of the separation of families due to the hasty manner of evacuation, evictions of large Vietnamese families because of the restrictions on the number of tenants per domicile, and most importantly, Luong

⁴⁷⁰ Indo-Chinese Resettlement Working Committee General Meeting, October 5, 1978, 1-7, Box 59, Folder 11, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*. Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA; Resettlement Committee Members in attendance, (Attachment A), September 1978, Box 59, Folder 10, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

discussed the need to, “bring other community groups together to help in understanding the Vietnamese in a social setting.”⁴⁷¹ Efforts like this were already taking place in the West Bank at the Martin Luther King Community Center.

The appointment of Fr. Luong to the ACC was a momentous decision, which helped to bridge the gap between the Vietnamese community and the black community in New Orleans East. When marginalized groups are allowed representation in a matter that greatly impacts their lives, there is more space for interracial action and justice. Scholar Eric K. Yamamoto argues, “Interracial justice entails a hard acknowledgement of ways in which racial groups harm one another, along with affirmative efforts to redress grievances with present-day effects.”⁴⁷² He contends that, “for groups seeking to live together peaceably and work together politically, interracial justice serves in many instances as a bridge between currently felt racial wounds and workable intergroup relations.”⁴⁷³ Fr. Luong’s attempts to make visible the cultural characteristics of the Vietnamese in his October draft report was in fact an attempt to bridge the gap between the black community and the Vietnamese community. He hoped that his findings would “clarify some of misunderstanding between the black and Vietnamese in the past,” thereby easing and fostering, “goodwill and fraternity among all minorities.”⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ Minutes Indo-Chinese Resettlement Task Force Meeting, October 17, 1978, 2, Box 59, Folder 11, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*. Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁷² Eric K. Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America*, (New York: NYU Press), 172.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁴⁷⁴ Letter, Rev. Dominic M. Luong to Ms. Cheryl Q. Wilson, October 27, 1978, Box

After months of compiling data, Mayor Morial announced in a December press release that his task force had completed its study on the impact of Vietnamese relocation.⁴⁷⁵ The University of New Orleans (UNO) released their official study entitled “Vietnamese Refugee Living Conditions in the New Orleans Metro Area,” which was later dubbed “the Report,” by Urban League officials. After releasing the study, the mayor stated that the committee could draw no conclusions concerning the Vietnamese impact using the data provided them. The last paragraphs of the report concluded that the “impact of Indo-Chinese in New Orleans was minimal.” In fact, at the close of the report, which featured a comparison of Indo-Chinese housing demand in 1978 versus the number of vacant units in the period, the report found that, “even if twice as many Indo-Chinese settled in the New Orleans metro, it would be extremely difficult to argue they pose a substantial new burden for the existing housing stock.”⁴⁷⁶ The ULGNO had lost its battle with the ACC. Black voices were once again ignored and tensions were not eased between the Vietnamese community and the black and poor communities in New Orleans East. The conflict, which arose between the ACC, the ULGNO, and the black community during the period of Vietnamese resettlement, signaled another failure of Catholic interracial organizing.

59, Folder 11, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁷⁵ Mayor Ernest Morial “News: City of New Orleans,” Public Information Office, December 7, 1978, No. 210, 1-2, Box 59, Folder 11, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁷⁶ Ragas and Maruggi, Vietnamese Refugee Living Conditions in New Orleans Area, December 7, 1978, 1-30, *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center.

When the voices of the marginalized are ignored or left out of the discussion, when the groups affected are not allowed a seat at the table or leadership role in deciding their fate, Catholic interracial organizing becomes an impossibility. While the Vietnamese were gaining more voice and representation in the archdiocese, black Catholics continued to deal with the same issues of the past, racism, a lack of cultural inclusion in church liturgy, and an overall discrepancy in black Catholic representation both locally and nationally.

A Return to Thomas Wyatt Turners' Vision of Catholic Interracialism: Demands for Black Cultural Inclusion in Church Liturgy

The black Catholic organizations established in the early 1970s had, by 1979, ramped up their struggle for true black inclusion in the Catholic Church. At this time, black Catholic leaders argued that the inclusion of black ritual, song, and dance in church liturgy was necessary if black Catholics were to remain loyal to the Catholic Church. Black Catholic leader Clarence Rivers asserted that the Catholic Church “will remain religiously ineffective in the black community unless it can effectively syncretize African culture and Biblical religion.”⁴⁷⁷ Rivers noted that this process will be filled with, “tension and conflict as well as joy and appreciation [observing that] African American Catholics are refusing to remain in the shadows, as strangers in a strange land, mouthing words and phrases that do not speak of their experience with the Church.”⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷Marvin L. Krier Mitch, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 147-148.

⁴⁷⁸Ibid., 147-148.

That year, in their pastoral letter titled, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," U.S. Catholic bishops articulated their views on racism in the church and society at large. The pastoral letter spoke of the racism that endured in society and in the Church and acknowledged that despite some advancement, covert forms of racism still remained. They contended "The climate of crisis engendered by demonstrations, protest, and confrontation has given way to a mood of indifference; and other issues occupy our attention. We have allowed conformity to social pressures to replace compliance with social justice." The Church of the late 1970s had transformed racially from a church focused solely on black and white relations: "Worldwide, the Church today is not just European and American; it is also African, Asian, Indian, and Oceanic. It is western, eastern, northern, and southern, black and also brown, white and also red and yellow." The bishops agreed with the assertions Clarence Rivers made that the Church needed to "respect and foster the spiritual . . . gifts of the various races and peoples" and encourage the incorporation of these gifts into the liturgy." The bishops recommended the "active spiritual and financial support of associations and institutions organized by Catholic blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians within the Church for the promotion of ministry to and by their respective communities." The Church continued to remain committed to Catholic interracial justice, which is evidenced in their assertion that there was also a need for, "more attention to finding ways in which minorities can work together across racial and cultural lines to avoid duplication and competition among themselves." The bishops also called for the incorporation of minority Catholic leaders, particularly in areas

where blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and Asians were numerous. The Bishops believed that, “all too often in the very places where blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians are numerous, the Church's officials and representatives, both clerical and lay, are predominantly white.”⁴⁷⁹

In 1980, black Catholics nationally and black Catholic New Orleanians locally saw some success. That year, the National Office for Black Catholics held its first biennial conference and from that conference came a Black Catholic Action Agenda for the 1980s. The NBCCC established the Xavier Institute for Black Catholic Studies in New Orleans. The following year marked the rebirth of the interracial Catholic organization the Catholic Committee of the South (CCS). The revamped CCS now saw itself as a system of people across the South who were devoted to solidarity with the oppressed. This revitalized organization brought together an interracial cadre of bishops, grassroots organization, and church leaders across the South. The network’s main function was to provide a space where “patterns of injustice and causal connections are clarified, solidarity is strengthened, communication is facilitated, potentials for constructive change are discerned, action for justice is fostered, [and] the voice of the poor is heard and heeded.”⁴⁸⁰ Once the church began to heed the criticisms of black Catholics and black leaders in the

⁴⁷⁹ U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism, “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” 1979. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm>

⁴⁸⁰ Catholic Committee of the South, American Catholic Research Center and University Archives Finding Aid. <http://archives.lib.cua.edu/findingaid/ccs.cfm#series3>

community, Catholic interracialism became more of a possibility. Only when minority Catholics were allowed to represent the needs of their own communities could the tenets of Catholic interracialism be realized.

Mending the Racial Divide: Calls for Catholic Interracial Activity and Cultural Awareness

Vietnamese priest and now head of the Association of Vietnamese Catholics in the United States, Fr. Luong, continued his mission to unite the black and Vietnamese communities of New Orleans East. In 1982, Fr. Luong announced a summer recreation program, which included several volleyball, soccer and touch football matches. He noted that two touch football teams of blacks would also be supervised over the summer. Parents of all races helped organize the games and a community picnic, which featured Southeast Asian and local foods. Fr. Dominic asserted that, “as a consequence of these summer activities, inter-group harmony had increased in the Versailles area.”⁴⁸¹ A year later, in the summer of 1983, the Vietnamese community and the archdiocese of New Orleans began work on the Vina Township. The project featured the creation of a two Vina Subdivisions, Catholic Church and Community Services, a City Park, a Nursing Home, a Vietnamese Catholic School, a Commercial Zone, Shopping Center, Program Center housing offices, bilingual library, a broadcasting station, and Memorial Plaza War monument. While the township would be set in a predominantly Vietnamese area of New Orleans

⁴⁸¹ Corinne Barnwell to Members of Task Force on Refugee Resettlement, Minutes Meeting on October 19, 1982, 1-2. *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

East, the officials in charge of the project asserted the social services provided in the area would benefit both American and Asian communities.⁴⁸² The Vietnamese and American garden monument would feature an inscription, which read, “In honor of the men and the women of the United States of America and Vietnam who served their countries during the Vietnam Conflict and in loving memory of those who gave their lives in the cause of freedom.”⁴⁸³ At the close of the year, Archbishop Hannan established the Mary Queen of Vietnam Parish for Vietnamese Catholics in the community. Fr. Dominic Luong was named first pastor of the parish. The Mary Queen of Vietnamese Parish marked the first personal parish allotted to Vietnamese refugees who had settled in the United States. The parish became a blueprint for creation of similar Vietnamese parishes across the US.⁴⁸⁴

In the same way that the Vietnamese sought to mend relations with the black community in the 1980s, black Catholics also hoped to mend their relationship with the Church and other groups. In 1984, U.S. black bishops released a pastoral letter on evangelization in the black community. Harold R. Perry, Bishop of New Orleans, among a host of other notable black bishops, called for the realization of a truly universal church in which all cultures and heritages were given equal weight,

⁴⁸² Hung “Andy” Van Chau, Blueprint for Vina Township New Orleans East, July 14, 1983, 1-6. *Urban League of Greater New Orleans Collection, 1978-1988*, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 1-6.

⁴⁸⁴ Father Viet Chau, Father Bac-Hai, Mr. Toan Tran, Mrs Cuong, and Mrs. Nguyet “History of Vietnamese Immigration to New Orleans,” *Clarion Herald*, July 1, 2014, <https://clarionherald.org/2014/07/01/history-of-vietnamese-immigration-to-new-orleans/>

appreciation, and acceptance. The black bishops asserted that “to be Catholic is to be universal. To be universal is not to be uniform. It does mean, however, that the gifts of individuals and of particular groups become the common heritage shared by all.”⁴⁸⁵ They continued, “Just as we lay claims to the gifts of Blackness so we share these gifts within the Black community at large and within the Church. This will be our part in building up of the whole Church.”⁴⁸⁶

Black Catholics voiced the need to include black ritual in church liturgy and to expose people outside of the black community to black Catholic worship. In the late 1980s, 100 black Catholics and those responsible for their spiritual care gathered at Xavier University to articulate their shared concerns. The meeting also served as a way to select eighteen delegates who would represent the Archdiocese of New Orleans at the upcoming Black Catholic Congress scheduled to convene a year later in May 1987. Once again, black Catholics, from young to old, called for a greater voice and inclusion in church dealings. Black Catholic youth at the gathering proclaimed, “Let us be involved! This is Our faith! This is Our Church! Let us help to make the Word of God real in today’s world.”⁴⁸⁷ Others asserted, “let us participate fully; let us help to solve our own problems; give us freedom in the Church to save

⁴⁸⁵ Black Bishops of the United States, “What We Have Seen and Heard,” A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States, September 9, 1984, 4. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/resources/what-we-have-seen-and-heard.cfm>

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁸⁷ Concerns Articulated at the Archdiocesan Day of Prayer and Reflection, November 8, 1986, 1. *African Americans and the Roman Catholic Church, 1920s-Present*, Xavier University Archives and Special Collections, New Orleans, LA.

our families.”⁴⁸⁸ In reference to black Catholic leadership, participants stated that, “Ministry is more effective when those ministered to and those who minister can identify with each other. More black clergy, deacons and religious are needed to minister to black Catholics and to deepen black spirituality.”⁴⁸⁹ They called for, “more input from the black community in decision-making and significant representation on all levels in the Church.”⁴⁹⁰ They spoke of justice, recognition and equal opportunity. By the close of the meeting, the delegates selected were now ready to share their thoughts at the National Black Catholic Congress.

From May 21-24, the National Black Catholic Congress met in Washington, DC. This gathering marked the resurrection of the National Black Catholic Congresses that were held from 1889 to 1894. The revitalization of the Black Catholic Congresses displayed a long history of black Catholic protest and interracial activity. During the conference, participants proposed the establishment of a permanent structure with localized diocesan offices that would focus on black concerns. Attendees proposed that the concerns of black Catholics and the issues faced by the black community be included in church policy. In terms of interracial activity, the members of the National Black Catholic Congress advanced the idea of raising the consciousness of white leadership by inviting them to attend workshops and programs that “will help them know and appreciate the culture in the black

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 5.

Community.”⁴⁹¹ Delegates also put forth the idea that joint programs with other black parishes should invite white or mixed parishes to take part in mutual projects that might bring about “attitudinal changes in the breaking of barriers.”⁴⁹² The black Catholic community wanted self-sufficiency, but it also understood the desire to include white leadership in the struggle. Lastly, the proposed programs “aimed at addressing Social Justice issues through establishment of social action projects with the specific goal of identifying the presence of racism in the institutional structure of the Church, and identifying methods of eradicating racism within the institutional structure.” While these proposals were intended to reflect the wishes of black Catholics across the US, the most change seemed to occur in New Orleans.

By 1988, there were a reported eighteen all-black parishes and ten black Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Several mostly black Catholic Churches had already adapted the Mass to include black styles of worship, including gospel music and revival-style preaching within the Catholic liturgy.⁴⁹³ Although change did occur in this period, black priests in the archdiocese remained wary of the church’s commitment to ending racism within its ranks. Of particular note is Rev. Glenn Jeanmarie, one of the nineteen black Catholic priests in the archdiocese who supported Rev. George Stallings Jr.’s intention to break from the Catholic Church and

⁴⁹¹ The National Black Catholic Congress: The National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan, May 21-24th 1987, 8. *African Americans and the Roman Catholic Church, 1920s-Present*, Xavier University Archives and Special Collections, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁹³ Mary Foster, “Catholics Already Incorporate Culture into Worship, Associated Press, July 28, 1989. <https://www.apnews.com/904373328b7b014cef4017c34d6aefce>

establish the Imani Temple African American Catholic Congregation in Washington, DC. When asked why he left the church in a Q & A with the Washington Post in 1989, Stallings replied “I left the Roman Catholic Church Stallings asserted that he left” primarily because,

That institution was not willing to embrace the unique spiritual and cultural gifts of African Americans in such a way that we felt that we had ownership and control over our own destiny within Roman Catholicism. I still believe to this day that Roman Catholicism only offers token expression to black people.⁴⁹⁴

Although he was not from New Orleans, Stallings had many supporters among the black Catholic community in the city. Rev. Jeanmarie stated, “What Rev. Stallings is saying is for effective and true evangelism to take place in a community not only cultural needs but aspirations must also be addressed.” Jeanmarie decried the perception that this split would create a division because he asserted that division “already existed in America and in the church because of racism.”⁴⁹⁵ Black Catholic priest of New Orleans, Thadeus Boucree asserted that most black Catholics in the city would remain faithful to the current Catholic Church and that no separate church would be formed in the city. In 1990, Bishop Glenn Jeanmarie broke away from the New Orleans Archdiocese and joined Stallings’ Imani Temple community. His

⁴⁹⁴ Hamil R. Harris and Mike DeBonis, “Q&A with Imani Temple Founder George A. Stallings Jr.,” *Washington Post*, October 12, 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/qanda-with-imani-temple-founder-george-a-stallings-jr/2012/10/12/8f7a87c4-13df-11e2-bf18-a8a596df4bee_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.66b7a412b724; Associated Press, “Blacks and Whites Still go Separate Ways to Worship,” *Times-Picayune*, September 24, 1989, *Newsbank*.

⁴⁹⁵ Mary Foster, “Catholics Already Incorporate Culture into Worship, Associated Press, July 28, 1989. <https://www.apnews.com/904373328b7b014cef4017c34d6aefce>

departure from the archdiocese reflected the fact that although the Catholic Church's relationship with their black parishioners was changing, it was not changing fast enough. Both Stallings and Jeanmarie were eventually excommunicated from the Catholic Church, but despite this, their Imani Temple congregation continued to grow.⁴⁹⁶ This signaled the persistence of black Catholics' discontent and unresolved issues with the Church as a result of structural racism.

By the late 1990s, the black community in Versailles had increased, and black and Vietnamese children came into constant contact with one another in schools in New Orleans East. Although the Vietnamese community interacted with the black community by way of the schools they shared, they did not spend much time together outside of the classroom. The Vietnamese community remained an insular group well into the early 2000s.⁴⁹⁷ Despite the fact that Vietnamese and black relationships to the Catholic church were seemingly different in the 20th century, they would find common ground when Hurricane Katrina made landfall in 2005. Although Catholic interracialism and interracial organizing had displayed both the limits and possibilities for cross-racial Catholic cooperation in the late 20th century, structural racism within the church, perceptions of favoritism with respect to unequal Catholic aid and support during and after Vietnamese resettlement functioned to divide the two

⁴⁹⁶ B. Drummond Ayres Jr., "Cardinal Forbids Mass by Black Priest," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1989. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/25/us/cardinal-forbids-mass-by-black-priest.html>; Kevin Bell, "New Orleans Rebel Church's Pastor is Dead at 40," *Times Picayune*, January 6, 1992, *Newsbank*.

⁴⁹⁷ *A Village Called Versailles*. Film. Directed by S. Leo Chiang, USA, Walking Iris Films, 2009.

oppressed communities. Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the two communities would have the chance to realize the tenets and goals of Catholic interracial activity as they worked together to rebuild their homes and lives after one of the most devastating hurricanes in U.S. history.

Chapter 4

Hurricane Katrina and The Catholic Church: Toward Interracial Cooperation

The Catholic Church's attempts to facilitate Catholic interracial action in the post-Katrina period reflect the culmination of a longer history of Catholic interracial activity outlined in prior chapters. The post-Katrina moment presented a period that was ripe for Catholic facilitated interracial action, particularly as the state and federal governments were slow to act. As the church began to truly confront the institutional racism still present in its own institutions, members of the clergy called for interracial harmony and action as the city sought to recover. This chapter grapples with the question of how Catholic Church officials used the doctrine of Catholic interracial action to help New Orleanians recover and rebuild in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The 2005 hurricane season was a particularly harsh one for the residents of New Orleans. The number of tropical storms and hurricanes that hit the area that year was unlike any other time in the city's history. The number of lives, jobs, homes and businesses lost to Hurricane Katrina, Rita, and Wilma would leave the city reeling for years to come. Scholars Alan H. Stein and Gene B. Preuss stated that, "the growing number of town meetings, conferences, and congressional subcommittees that have convened to hear the testimony and stories of both the disaster itself and the condemnation of the slow response of local, state, and national relief efforts," attest to

the chaos left in the wake to the 2005 hurricane season.⁴⁹⁸ While this chapter focuses on community and church efforts post-Katrina, it is important to note that Hurricane Rita, which made landfall a month after Katrina in September 2005, and hurricane Wilma, which came a month later in October 2005, only added to the misery.

Katrina exposed racial and class divisions that existed well before the storm. Pre-Katrina, the city was characterized by high rates of poverty and racial segregation. Blacks experienced a poverty rate of 35%, which was more than 3 times the white rate of 11%. 43% of the black population in New Orleans lived in poor neighborhoods. New Orleans is, “one of the 10 or 15 most racially segregated among the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas.”⁴⁹⁹ When Hurricane Katrina made landfall, those with the means left the city, while those without were left to their own devices. When it came time to return to the city after the waters had receded, blacks faced an uphill battle when it came time to claim insurance benefits. Many found that they did not have the right kind of insurance to cover certain levels of damage done to their properties.

In the days following the storm, government officials at the federal, state, and local level blamed one another for the slow response during and after Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans constituted a majority of the state’s population that incurred extensive damage to their homes: “2,000, or two-thirds of those affected by extensive

⁴⁹⁸ Alan H. Stein and Gene B. Preuss, “Oral History, Folklore and Katrina,” in *There is no Such Thing as a Natural Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 37.

⁴⁹⁹ Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, “Pre-Katrina, Post-Katrina,” in *There is no Such Thing as a Natural Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

hurricane damage in Louisiana.”⁵⁰⁰ Hurricane Katrina disproportionately impacted African Americans in New Orleans. CRS report, “Hurricane Katrina Social Demographic Characteristics of Areas Impacted,” revealed that:

An estimated 310,000 black people were directly impacted by the storm, largely due to flooding in Orleans Parish. Blacks are estimated to have accounted for 44% of storm victims. In Orleans Parish, and estimated 272,000 black people were displaced by flooding or damage, accounting for 73% of the population affected by the storm in the parish. Among blacks living in Orleans Parish who were most likely displaced by the storm, over one-third (89,000 people, or 34% of displaced blacks) were estimated to have been poor based on 2000 Census data.⁵⁰¹

Schools and business were slow to return, which made it even more difficult for certain communities to come back. For the black and low-income communities of the city, the lack of infrastructure, the failure of the state and local governments to propose a workable recovery plan, and an unclear timetable concerning the dissemination of hurricane relief funds forced underrepresented communities to find different ways to begin rebuilding not just their homes, but their lives. Interracial organizing became a method of addressing these divisions and the lack of government response and aid in the wake of Katrina. Racial communities who were once only tolerant of one another, now worked together to hold their local and state governments socially and economically accountable in the aftermath of Katrina.

⁵⁰⁰ Thomas Gabe, Gene Falk, and Maggie McCarthy, Congressional Research Service, *Hurricane Katrina: Social-Demographic Characteristics of Impacted Areas* (Washington, D.C., 2005), 11.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

The fury of Hurricane Katrina brought Catholics together across both race and class divisions. In the wake of the storm, their shared religion and mutual tragedy would forever bind them. Catholic interracial organizing proved more successful in the post-Katrina moment than it had throughout much of the 20th century. Three instances highlight the church's commitment to interracial activity based on Catholic doctrine post-Katrina. First, in New Orleans East, under the leadership of Catholic officials and community organizations, African Americans united with the Vietnamese community to protest the building of a landfill in their community. The second case of successful Catholic interracial action involved the collaborative efforts of Providence, a nonprofit organization, and a consortium of interracial organizations under the archdiocese, to institute a 5-year plan to rebuild the poorest neighborhoods in the city. Catholic Charities, Christopher Homes, St. Peter Claver/UJAMAA, St. Joseph's/Tulane Canal CDC, and Reconcile New Orleans united to launch a five-year housing plan that would work to develop mixed-income housing. Smaller Catholic affiliates, including Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, the Hispanic Apostolate, and the Sisters of the Holy Family, also participated in the effort, which exemplified the diversity of the Church's social welfare organizations. The third instance brings my discussion of Catholic interracial action full circle. In December of 2006, Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes released a pastoral letter on racial harmony and interracial action. Employing the words of his predecessor, Archbishop Joseph Rummel, Hughes reaffirmed the church's commitment to its long-time mission of social justice,

interracial action, and racial harmony, although he put it into practice in a way Rummel could have scarcely imagined.⁵⁰²

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 9, 2005, “the areas damaged were 45.8% black, compared to 26.4% in undamaged areas, and that 20.9% of the households in damaged areas were poor, compared to 15.3% in undamaged areas.”⁵⁰³ If people in these heavily affected areas were prevented from returning, New Orleans would lose roughly eighty percent of its black population in comparison to fifty percent of its white population.⁵⁰⁴ Katrina was one of the worst storm’s the Gulf Coast had ever encountered, as it flooded eighty percent of the city and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.⁵⁰⁵

***The Catholic Church Join with Vietnamese and African American Residents of
New Orleans East Against Landfill***

⁵⁰²“Catholic Charities USA Awards \$25 Million Grant to N.O,” *Clarion Herald*, October 29, 2005, 5, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “Preliminary Draft of a Pastoral Plan for Archdiocese,” *Clarion Herald*, December 1, 2005, 1, 5, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Peter Finney Jr., “Latinos who Helped Dig New Orleans Seek to Fit In,” *Clarion Herald*, May 6, 2006, 8, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Ron Brocato, “Catholic Entities Band Together to Launch Housing Efforts,” *Clarion Herald*, May 6, 2006, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “Restoring Schools Key to Hurricane Recovery, Panelists Tell Congress,” *Clarion Herald*, May 6, 2006, 7, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁰³ Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, “Pre-Katrina, Post-Katrina,” in *There is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 6.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁰⁵ “Hurricane Katrina Anniversary: Gulf Coast Remembers and Looks Ahead,” accessed August 29, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/29/us/katrina-anniversary/>.

New Orleans East, home to both African American and Vietnamese communities, was one of the hardest hit areas in city. Five years before Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, African Americans in the Village de L'Est constituted roughly seventy-eight percent of renters relying on Section 8, government subsidized apartments. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Vietnamese, "constituted less than 1.5 percent of the city's population."⁵⁰⁶ Pre-Katrina New Orleans was a majority black city with African Americans making up sixty-eight percent of the city's population. The poverty rate among African Americans and the Vietnamese was higher than that among the overall New Orleans pre-Katrina population, which averaged eighteen percent; African Americans were at thirty-five percent and the Vietnamese were at thirty-one percent. Five years before Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, African Americans in the Village de L'Est constituted roughly seventy-eight percent of renters relying on Section 8, government subsidized apartments. As a result of Katrina, the demographics of the area changed significantly. "By Spring 2007 over 90 percent of the Vietnamese American residents but fewer than 50 percent of the African Americans had returned to Village de L'Est,"⁵⁰⁷ in New Orleans East. The main reason for the disparity in the number of African Americans versus the number of Vietnamese returning to the city can be attributed to the fact that "for African American renters the unavailability of affordable rental housing had constituted a

⁵⁰⁶ Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen, and Verna M. Keith, "Resilient History and the Rebuilding of a Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 2007): 770.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 772.

barrier to return,” as “three apartment complexes had housed nearly 40 percent of the African American population in the neighborhood.”⁵⁰⁸ In the weeks following Katrina, Vietnamese residents began returning to New Orleans East determined to rebuild their homes and church.⁵⁰⁹ The African American residents of New Orleans East, who were impressed by the tenacity of the Vietnamese community, also began to return, although in smaller numbers. The black newspaper, *The New Orleans Louisiana Weekly* stated that the key to the quick and successful return of the Vietnamese was “that the Vietnamese community refused to place its salvation into the hands of the government.”⁵¹⁰ Sensing a lack of government aid, the Vietnamese community and Father Vien Nguyen, head of Mary Queen of Vietnam Church (MQVC), shared what little resources they had with their African American neighbors. Myron Angel, a resident of New Orleans East, stated, “After the storm, there was so much sharing from the Vietnamese Americans, especially from Father Vien Nguyen.”⁵¹¹ Father Nguyen’s MQVC had experienced minimal damage; thus, his church was the first to open its doors to both African American and Vietnamese in New Orleans East. In the months following the storm, MQVC served as a temporary

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 773.

⁵⁰⁹ “New Orleans East received a Blow from Katrina, but will recover,” *Clarion Herald*, November 5, 2005, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵¹⁰ Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen, and Verna M. Keith, “Resilient History and the Rebuilding of a Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East,” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 2007): 774.

⁵¹¹ Eric Tang, “A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (March 2011): 123.

shelter for the first interracial group of returnees. It also housed food and clothing donations and became a hub for gathering information on missing family members and friends. Father Nguyen MQVC became an informational as well as a temporary religious meeting space for black community leaders and their constituents.⁵¹²

In the beginning of November 2005, Father Nguyen contacted black religious leaders in the area and invited them and their parishioners to join the first mass post-Katrina at MQVC. The first mass, which was held a month after Katrina made landfall, attracted 300 community members; the following Sunday, the number rose to 800, and by the close of May the following year, the number had risen once more to 2,300. Prior to the storm, black community leader Myron Angel asserted that the relationship between the African American and Vietnamese communities had been tolerant previously, but the groups' shared suffering brought about by the storm signaled a change in the relationship. He stated, "after a catastrophe, groups can become more insular, more defensive about protecting their community and businesses. But the Vietnamese folks did just the opposite."⁵¹³ Labeled the Resurrection Mass for New Orleans East, a cross-racial and cross-cultural group of New Orleans East residents listened to a mix of gospel and Vietnamese hymns. At the service, Archbishop Alfred Hughes encouraged what he termed "a community with

⁵¹² Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen, and Verna M. Keith, "Resilient History and the Rebuilding of a Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 2007): 773-774.

⁵¹³ Eric Tang, "A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (March 2011): 124.

one soul.” He advocated collaboration that cut across, “lines of former division, such as Asian, Caucasian, and African American.” Hughes continued, “What a magnificent expression of the church: Different cultures, different races, one faith.”⁵¹⁴ As the mass concluded, African American Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis exclaimed, “We will be back, and we will be back better;” she continued, “but in His time, not ours.”⁵¹⁵ As the New Orleans East community continued to return and rebuild, a mutual alliance between the area’s African American and Vietnamese residents would challenge the local power structure by arguing for more political inclusion in the rebuilding process.

In the months to come, black and Vietnamese New Orleanians, under the direction of Vietnamese priests, political and local leaders, united in New Orleans East to argue for more social and political inclusion in the recovery and rebuilding process. Scholar Eric Tang stated that, “in the media, Vietnamese American leaders could be heard extolling grassroots efforts to defend New Orleans from developers and others who would profit from the disaster.”⁵¹⁶ In reference to the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East, Tang argued that “through it all, they allied with their black neighbors, who saw Katrina as nothing short of a referendum on race and class inequalities in the United States.”⁵¹⁷ This moment of interracial organizing and

⁵¹⁴ Bruce Hamilton, “Unshaken Faith: East N.O Vietnamese Full of Hope,” *Times Picayune*, October 24, 2005, 1, NewsBank.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1; *A Village Called Versailles*, directed by S. Leo Chiang (New Day Films, 2009) DVD.

⁵¹⁶ Eric Tang, “A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (March 2011): 120.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

the realization of mutually resilient and resonant histories among Vietnamese and black residents in New Orleans East marked the culmination of the Catholic Church's long history of interracial coalition building and grassroots organizing. As the state was slow to respond to the needs of various racial minorities in the city's most devastated regions, the church stepped in to guide the process of rebuilding. In the absence of federal, state, and local governmental assistance, the Catholic Church, alongside a cadre of interracial nonprofits and local leaders became crucial to the recovery of New Orleans' most vulnerable communities.⁵¹⁸

On February 14th, 2006, Mayor Ray Nagin used emergency powers to grant a conditional use permit to waste management. In essence, the mayor suspended the city's zoning ordinance, which allowed for the creation of a landfill 1.2 miles from New Orleans East. Up until Nagin's recent declaration, city agencies had twice denied proposals to open a landfill at 16600 Chef Menteur Highway; once in 1997 and again in 2000.⁵¹⁹ By this point, many Vietnamese had returned home to begin the rebuilding process. Father Vien Nguyen stated, "We had heard it was only for construction debris, but since then we have heard that the definition of construction debris has changed to include many other things."⁵²⁰ Father Vien Nguyen, worried

⁵¹⁸ Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen Chen and Verna M Keith, "Resilient History and the Rebuilding of Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 94. No. 3., 773.

⁵¹⁹ Gordon Russell, "Landfill Dumping to Slow Under Deal; But New Proposed Site is Near Wild Life Refuge," *Times Picayune*, Feb. 23, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵²⁰ Gordon Russell, "Debris Landfill Put on Fast Track-But New Site May be Bound for Trouble," *Times-Picayune*, April 1, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

about the harmful toxins that would inevitably drain into nearby waterways, stated, “It's draining into the Maxent Canal, which is connected to our community. That's where a lot of people in my community use the water in their gardens.”⁵²¹ The Vietnamese community had worked together to devise its own plan for revitalization, but the mayor refused to listen to their plan. Their plan expressed interest in building a Viet Town, which would consist of a numerous social service and community facilities.

Early on, African American Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis, a representative of New Orleans East, had taken no stance on the landfill. The councilwoman, however, had indicated to Rev. Nguyen that she opposed the landfill and that she felt “her hands were tied because of the executive order.”⁵²² On April 3, several weeks after Nagin publicly proposed the landfill, more than 100 residents of New Orleans East, mostly from the Village de l’Est, a Vietnamese enclave, attended a meeting with city officials held at MQVC. At that meeting, members of the community opposed the construction of a debris landfill in their community. Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis attended the meeting and vowed to craft a council resolution requesting that Mayor Nagin rescind his executive order to open a landfill in her district. Nagin did not attend the meeting, but Sanitation Director Veronica White, who stood in his place, gave no clear sign regarding whether the mayor would change his mind on the site. As the meeting ended, Father Vien Nguyen

⁵²¹ Ibid., 1.

⁵²² Ibid., 1.

felt it had been a success in that state officials now knew “how the people felt.”⁵²³ Those in attendance planned to present their resolution at a city council meeting slated for Thursday April 6th.

Meanwhile, Catholic and Protestant churches combined forces to help their parishioners rebuild the community. MQVC also provided volunteers to help predominantly African American churches in New Orleans East cleanup and repair salvageable infrastructure. An African American resident of the area remarked, “Those Vietnamese spent like 20 hours. . . [They] came to our church [to] clean our church and prepare for us.”⁵²⁴ When asked if the rebuilding process had the effect of bringing the two racial communities closer together, African Americans and Vietnamese agreed that the storm had in fact brought them closer together as a community.

On April 6, the New Orleans East community came out in mass to attend the city council meeting. Father Vien Nguyen, Pastor of the MQVC, spoke to council members on behalf of not only the Vietnamese community, but for the entire New Orleans East community, including many of its black residents. He proclaimed that the mayor had failed to “consult with the community”⁵²⁵ in proposing the landfill.

⁵²³ Gordon Russell, “Eastern N.O. Rips Landfill Proposal-Not in Our Area, 100 Residents Vow,” *Times Picayune*, April 4, 2006, NewsBank.

⁵²⁴ Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen Chen and Verna M. Keith, “Resilient History and the Rebuilding of a Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East,” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (December 2007): 778.

⁵²⁵ Frank Donze, “Council Asks Nagin to Abandon Landfill-Mayor Gives No Sign That he Will Comply,” *Times-Picayune*, April 7, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

Although the city council unanimously requested that Mayor Nagin recall his executive order on the landfill, he refused to comply. From there, the New Orleans East community took their protest to the Louisiana Legislature, the federal court, and the state court, but their efforts met with little success.⁵²⁶ A few days later, on April 13, the state Department of Environmental Quality announced the opening of a new construction landfill in New Orleans East, despite prolonged opposition to the Nagin's executive order. Nagin continued to deny the long-term impact of the landfill on the ability of the community to recover after Katrina.⁵²⁷

On April 25th, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a national civil rights organization, joined the protest efforts. In collaboration with MQVC, African Americans stood alongside members of the Vietnamese community and hosted a rally against the landfill. The Louisiana Environmental Action Network and Citizens for a Strong New Orleans East asked U.S District Judge Martin Feldman to issue a temporary restraining order against the landfill, which was operated by Waste Management of Louisiana. The community sought to curb the dumping of construction debris in the landfill, which had begun two weeks prior to the city council's decision.⁵²⁸ Two days later, Judge Feldman rejected the lawsuit, stating that the anti-landfill coalition had not met the burden of proof in the case. They had failed

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 1; *A Village Called Versailles*, directed by S. Leo Chiang (New Day Films, 2009) DVD.

⁵²⁷ Gordon Russell, "Storm Debris Landfill is Ok'd; Easter N.O. Residents Furious," *Times Picayune*, April 14, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵²⁸ Gordon Russell, "Shut Down Landfill, Groups Ask Judge-Eastern N.O. Site Takes Construction Debris," *Times Picayune*, April 26, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

to prove that the landfill caused environmental harm or physical harm to Vietnamese residents in New Orleans East.⁵²⁹

In May 2006, the African American and Vietnamese communities of New Orleans teamed up with the Southern Poverty Law Center, a prominent civil rights organization, to call for the closure of the Chef Menteur Landfill. The SCLC soon joined their ranks.⁵³⁰ The SCLC's arrival and subsequent participation in actions to stop the landfill stands as one of the most notable moments of interracial activity in the post-Katrina moment. The day after Judge Feldman dismissed the lawsuit, members of the SCLC, led by President Charles Steele and other members/officials of the civil rights group, joined roughly seventy Vietnamese protesters on the steps of City Hall. Participants chanted protest slogans and sang old civil rights songs like "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around." Few blacks from New Orleans East attended the protest because they feared that it would sway the vote of the upcoming mayoral election between then Mayor, Ray Nagin, and Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu. However, local African American activist and resident of New Orleans East, Rev. Raymond Brown, did attend the protest to show his support.⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ Susan Finch, "Lawsuit to Block Landfill Rejected-Chef Highway site to Take Storm Debris," *Times Picayune*, April 28, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵³⁰ Susan Finch, "SCLC Joins Protest Against Landfill; Meeting with Nagin Planned in Dispute," *Times Picayune*, May 6, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Clarence L. Mohr and Lawrence N. Powell, "Through the Eye of Katrina: The Past as Prologue? An Introduction," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (Dec., 2007): 693-694.

⁵³¹ Susan Finch, "SCLC Joins Protest Against Landfill; Meeting with Nagin Planned in Dispute," *Times Picayune*, May 6, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

In early May, the interracial cadre of organizations finally found some success after months of protest. Democratic Senator Joel Chaisson II proposed Senate Bill 718, which would require the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to investigate whether there was enough space to house all of the debris from Katrina. If no sufficient space existed, then DEQ would have to rule it illegal to open a landfill using emergency powers. In essence, the Chef Menteur landfill in New Orleans East would have to shut down. Although this signaled a win for the anti-landfill side of the debate, the Senate committee attached an amendment to the bill. The amendment allowed local governments to prevent approved landfills from receiving debris from surrounding parishes.⁵³² In response to the recent protest at City Hall, that Wednesday May 10, Mayor Nagin agreed to shut down the landfill for seventy-two hours in order for members of the coalition to test the debris. If they could prove that the materials dumped in the landfill were toxic, then he would close the site for good.⁵³³ The landfill dispute had raised several questions about environmental justice and vulnerable groups. New Orleans East was predominantly Vietnamese and African

⁵³² Laura Maggi, "Limits on Emergency Landfills Advance-Sites Called Key to Hastening Debris Removal," *Times Picayune*, May 10, 2006, 2, NewsBank.

⁵³³ Gordon Russell, "Landfill to Close for Testing: Nagin Says it's History if Hazards Found," *Times Picayune*, May 11, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Gordon Russell, "Landfill Remains Shut as Dispute Simmers-Deadlock on How to Test Debris," *Times Picayune*, May 18, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Bruce Egler, "Landfill Testing Option Offered-State Backs it, but Activists' Lawyer Cool," *Times Picayune*, May 19, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

American, two communities that were vulnerable to the political maneuverings that often rendered them silent and marginalized.⁵³⁴

Following the end of Mayor Nagin's seventy-two hour hold on dumping in the landfill, work resumed as trucks commenced dumping debris in the Chef Menteur facility. As community members and state officials continued to battle over the landfill, the federal government intervened and sent a mediator to resolve the dispute. By late June, Piyachat Terrell, deputy director of the White House's Asian American and Pacific Islander initiative was on her way to New Orleans. After speaking with community leaders, Ms. Terrell planned a joint meeting with state, local and federal officials in order to come to a common ground on the matter.⁵³⁵ Three days after Terrell arrived in New Orleans to deal with the landfill dispute, city and state officials released their test results on the toxicity of the landfill. They proclaimed that their air and water tests "clearly indicate the landfill is not toxic," however, opponents disagreed. Following the ruling, the anti-landfill coalition filed a second lawsuit against the Chef Menteur Landfill.⁵³⁶ This lawsuit argued that Mayor Ray Nagin abused his use of emergency authority in opening the Chef Menteur landfill.⁵³⁷ On

⁵³⁴ Gordon Russell, "Chef Menteur Landfill Testing Called a Farce-Critics Say Debris Proposal Would be a Useless Waste of Time," *Times Picayune*, May 26, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Laura Laggii, "House Committee Kills Bill to Allow Closing of Landfill," *Times Picayune*, June 13, 2006, 5, NewsBank.

⁵³⁵ Matthew Brown, "Mediator Sent to Resolve Landfill Feud; Critics of Debris Site Planning Rally Today," *Times Picayune*, June 27, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵³⁶ Gordon Russell, "Landfill is not Toxic, Say City and La.-But Opponents Say Tests Practically Useless," *Times Picayune*, July 1, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵³⁷ Gordon Russell, "Second Lawsuit Blasts East N.O. Landfill-Nagin Abused Power, Plaintiffs Contend," *Times Picayune*, July 8, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

Thursday July 13, Mayor Nagin declared that he would not renew his executive order to keep the landfill open and by August 14th the Chef Menteur facility was closed.

The closing of the landfill stood as a major win for the interracial coalition.⁵³⁸

Rev. William Maestri praised the efforts of Father Vien Nguyen in leading a successful recovery effort in New Orleans East. Archbishop Alfred Hughes agreed, stating that Father Nguyen, “gives so much to our church and our city.”⁵³⁹ Father Nguyen recalled the homily given by Archbishop Hughes on the eve of Hurricane Katrina; the archbishop had reminded his flock that “faith enables us to work together toward a community which guarantees to every former resident the right of return even of not precisely where they lived before.”⁵⁴⁰ He continued, “faith urges us to become a community, truly welcoming of people of every racial ethnic, religious and economic background.”⁵⁴¹ Father Nguyen saw himself as “an anchor to the people;” he continued, “they know I am here, that I will be here.”⁵⁴² Of the community, Father

⁵³⁸ Gordon Russell, “Landfill Permit May Expire-Nagin Won’t Renew Waiver,” *Times Picayune*, July 14, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Bruce Egger, “DEQ Will Abide by Landfill Decision-But Closing Site is a Mistake, Official Says,” *Times Picayune*, July 26, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Michelle Krupa, “Nagin Will Order Landfill to Close-Mayor Revises Stance on N.O. Debris Site,” *Times Picayune*, August 13, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Michell Krupa, “East N.O. Landfill Ordered to Close-Zoning Waiver Expires; Federal Court Fight Ahead,” *Times Picayune*, August 15, 2006, 1, NewsBank; Frank Donze, “Denied a Reprieve, Landfill Closes-Operator has Filed for an N.O. Permit,” *Times Picayune*, August 16, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵³⁹ John Pope, “East N.O. Priest Personifies Resilience-Vietnamese Leader Preached Self-Reliance,” *Times Picayune*, September 3, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵⁴⁰ Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, “Archbishop delivers homily at Katina Memorial Mass,” *Clarion Herald*, September 2, 2006, 4, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁴² John Pope, “East N.O. Priest Personifies Resilience-Vietnamese Leader Preached Self-Reliance,” *Times Picayune*, September 3, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

Nguyen said, “they trust that, with the help of others, I am able to gauge what is going on so that I would not mislead them in the reinvestment of their lives.”⁵⁴³

Following their victory, Vietnamese priests and activists portrayed the struggle against the landfill as one fought by a multiracial contingent rather than just the Vietnamese community. James Bui of the Union of North American Vietnamese Students Associations (UNAVASA), a nonprofit community-based organization, asserted that opposition to the landfill and the its eventual closing only came as a result of the collaborative efforts of the umbrella organization, the Citizens for a Stronger New Orleans East, which consisted of both Vietnamese American and black-led groups.⁵⁴⁴ In the weeks following the landfill victory, Father Vien attempted to repay the black community for its support during their campaign against the toxic waste dump by appearing regularly at meetings and events focused on the rights of displaced black residents. Father Vien offered “the support of the people of Versailles, [speaking] . . . at the rallies, town hall meetings, and community events put on by black coalitions seeking not only the right of return, but also the reopening of schools and public healthcare centers.”⁵⁴⁵ The interracial coalition that opposed the toxic landfill understood that when they “identify the state as the main orchestrator of

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Eric Tang, “A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 6 No 1 (March 2011), 128; Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen Chen and Verna M Keith, “Resilient History and the Rebuilding of Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 94. No. 3., 770-779.

⁵⁴⁵ Eric Tang, “A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 6 No 1 (March 2011) 129.

violence in their communities, it's hard to make appeals to the state to mitigate violence the state is committing,"⁵⁴⁶ but when working in collaboration with their trusted church officials and grassroots organizations of various racial expressions, what seems like an insurmountable task can be overcome.

***Interracial Cadre of Catholic Organizations and Affiliates Band Together to
Rebuild New Orleans***

On Monday, September 12, two weeks after Katrina made landfall, devastating New Orleans and parts of the Gulf Coast, President Bush visited the storm-ravaged city and met with local officials. After Bush toured the 7th Ward, one of several areas hit hard by the floodwaters, he spoke at a press conference in which he reassured the people of New Orleans and local government officials that the federal government would do everything in its power to provide much needed assistance. The federal government, however was wholly unprepared to respond to the catastrophic devastation Hurricane Katrina left in her wake.⁵⁴⁷ The local government also failed to respond adequately to the needs of the city's displaced residents. Mayor Ray Nagin created the Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOB), a group that consisted of mainly businessmen, real estate developers, a few

⁵⁴⁶Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press Books, 2013), 185.

⁵⁴⁷ Staff and Wire Writers, "Bush Stunned by Condition of New Orleans," *Times Picayune*, September 3, 2005, A1, NewsBank; Gordon Russell, "Nagin: Mistakes were made at all Levels-His Biggest Frustration was Slow Pace of Relief," *Times Picayune*, September 11, 2005, A1, NewsBank.

artists, and a few reputable community leaders, but unfortunately, did not include resident representation. The commission moved at a snail's pace when it came time to propose financial and tactical solutions to rebuilding New Orleans. Those in power struggled over whether businesses should come back first or whether their efforts should be focused on replenishing housing stock. Post-Katrina scholars, church officials, and residents began to fear that the local government would use policies to create a 'new' New Orleans, one that did not include those who occupied the low and working classes. Scholar Darwin Bond Graham argued, "Politically speaking, many black and poor residents, returned or otherwise, believe that the city's powerful want to tear out this black core but keep its cultural products—music, food, language history and art."⁵⁴⁸

As the federal, state, and local governments dragged their feet on the issue of housing, the Catholic Church stepped in to provide a swift response to rehousing New Orleanians who wanted to return home. The Catholic Church's interracial and collaborative approach to rebuilding New Orleans provided a space for a grassroots and largely faith-based response to the post-Katrina housing crisis. Catholic Charities, Christopher Homes, St. Peter Claver/UJAMAA, St. Joseph's/Tulane Canal CDC, and Reconcile New Orleans united to launch a five-year housing plan that sought to

⁵⁴⁸ Darwin Bond Graham, "The New Orleans that Race Built," in *Seeking Higher Ground: The Hurricane Katrina Crisis, Race, and Public Policy Reader*, ed. Manning Marable (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 25; Stephanie Houston Grey, "(Re) Imagining Ethnicity in the City of New Orleans: Katrina's Geographical Allegory," in *Seeking Higher Ground: The Hurricane Katrina Crisis, Race, and Public Policy Reader*, ed. Manning Marable (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 133.

develop mixed-income housing. Smaller Catholic affiliates, such as Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, the Hispanic Apostolate, and the Sisters of the Holy Family also participated in the effort. These Catholic interracial connections exemplified the diversity of social welfare organizations involved in rebuilding the city and signified what could be restored and rebuilt through faith-based interracial collaboration.

In late October 2005, the Archdiocese of New Orleans presented a preliminary draft of the pastoral plan for recovery at a Deanery meeting of church officials and parishioners. The plan estimated that over ninety-five percent of their parishioners planned to return. In the plan, the Archdiocese of New Orleans argued that the rate of return would not be immediate but would proceed gradually as housing became available. By this point, the percentage of those who had returned to the city ranged from thirty to forty percent, whereas sixty to seventy percent of Catholic parishioners still remained outside diocese lines. At the meeting, Hughes set a deadline of December 1 to complete a draft pastoral plan for recovery and planned to finish the final plan by December 30, which would land only a day before the release of Mayor Ray Nagin's BNOB recovery plan. The Church continually maintained its commitment to evangelization; thus, they needed a plan that took into consideration the concentration of priests in places where people were living. The archbishop affirmed that he would make sure that the African Americans, Vietnamese, and Latinos, which were populations whose churches were most impacted by the storm, would have a place to worship. Father Michale Jacques reassured these communities that Archbishop Hughes "wants to safeguard those

ethnic churches, especially to have places where African Americans, who are predominant in the city can worship;” he continued, “We don’t want to lose those folks.”⁵⁴⁹

As November marked the archdiocese’s transition from emergency response to the work of recovery, Christopher Homes, the housing arm of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, prepared to reopen. Christopher Homes, the first faith-based program focused on providing safe and affordable housing for low-income elderly folks, first emerged 40 years prior to Katrina. Executive Director of Christopher Homes, Dennis Adams affirmed that the “overwhelming goal of Christopher Homes is to return our residents to their homes. It may only be a 600-sqaure foot apartment, but it is their home.”⁵⁵⁰ The program would first consider those residents in the areas of the city that were most affected, and these areas were largely home to the elderly and poor. By the second week in November, 900 of the 2,700 apartment units under Christopher Homes’ management were ready to reopen. While the Catholic Church began the long struggle to rebuild the city, FEMA mismanagement of the city’s recovery efforts meant that monetary relief and housing efforts moved slowly.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ Peter Finney, “Deanery Meeting Shape Future of Archdiocese: Preliminary Draft of pastoral plan for archdiocese due December 1st,” *Clarion Herald*, October 22, 2005, 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁵⁰ “Parishes celebrating Masses as of Nov. 5-6,” *Clarion Herald*, November 5, 2005, 12, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁵¹ Florence L. Herman, “Christopher Homes Readying Residences for Reoccupancy,” *Clarion Herald*, November 5, 2005, 3, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

Church officials accused FEMA of mismanagement of the city's recovery funds. In fact, after Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, the new head of the bishop's hurricane relief task force, had asked FEMA about their recovery plan for devastated regions of the Gulf Coast, he concluded, "It was clear to me that not a whole lot of help was coming from FEMA." It was only after FEMA ignored questions posed by Archbishop Alfred Hughes of New Orleans and Bishop Thomas J. Rodi of Biloxi, Mississippi, that the task force realized that they would have to "continue to put strong pressure on the White House and Congress so that we get the needed answers."⁵⁵² Archbishop Hughes tied the rebuilding of the city to the reconstruction of the Archdiocese of New Orleans because the Church still stood as a crucial organizing and community space in the city.⁵⁵³ A month later, Dr. Norman Francis, then President of Xavier University, who had also lost his home in Katrina, reiterated the call for government accountability and assistance in rebuilding the city. He stated in an article that "in order for people to come back, they have to have housing."⁵⁵⁴ He continued, "The question is how can we collectively focus on this and plan well and not take ages to do it all."⁵⁵⁵

As donations flooded in from outside sources, and volunteers under the Church's Helping Hands made their way to the city to assist in the recovery effort, the

⁵⁵² "Bishops accuse FEMA, government of 'run-around,'" *Clarion Herald*, November 19, 2005, 8, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵⁴ Peter Finney Jr., "Francis determined to Rebuild Louisiana," *Clarion Herald*, December 10, 2005, 3, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Church's facilities continued to rebound.⁵⁵⁶ The Church began to think of innovative ways to confront the housing crisis, which had come to characterize the post-Katrina landscape, in an effort to bring people home.⁵⁵⁷ For example, on January 13 at a New Orleans field-hearing meeting before the subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity in New Orleans, James Kelly, CEO of Catholic Charities in New Orleans, emphasized the need for more mixed-income housing. He urged city officials to move quickly in rebuilding public housing units, called for an increase in housing vouchers, and implored officials to hand over control of housing from FEMA to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development would then work with state and local officials to expand low-income housing subsidies. Kelly stated that "rebuilding should be carried out in a manner that treats the area's poorest citizens with the same respect and dignity as [it treats] the more affluent." He continued, "High ground should be set

⁵⁵⁶ Peter Finney Jr., "Archbishop Hughes thanks the Catholic community for generosity," *Clarion Herald*, December 10, 2005, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Peter Finney, "Francis determined to rebuild Louisiana, Xavier," *Clarion Herald*, December 10, 2005, 3, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Beth Donze, "Kids give more than \$1 million to help storm-impacted peers," *Clarion Herald*, December 17, 2005, 4, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁵⁷ "Two lower Ninth War churches damaged by canal breach," *Clarion Herald*, December 10, 2005, 7, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Archbishop Alfred Hughes, "100-day Report on the Archdiocese of New Orleans," *Clarion Herald*, December 17, 2005, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; "Office of Schools set to move to De La Salle," *Clarion Herald*, December 17, 2005, 5, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Ron Brocato, "St. Jude repositions itself into housing Katrina refugees," *Clarion Herald*, December 17, 2005, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

aside for the poor and the rich-both black and white.” Kelly asserted that, to be successful, “we need a spirit of humility and collaboration. Most importantly, we will need God’s grace and God’s speed.”⁵⁵⁸

Katrina unearthed more than buildings and trees; the hurricane also made visible the perpetuation of race and class discrimination. At a Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. celebration in January of the following year, Church officials responded to Mayor Ray Nagin after he made, what church officials believed to be, racially divisive comments. At the MLK Jr. celebration, Mayor Ray Nagin stated that God told him New Orleans would be a “Chocolate City,” following Katrina.⁵⁵⁹ Archbishop Hughes, Father William Maestri, and other church officials responded to Nagin’s comments, which they believed to be divisive and dismissive of the diverse makeup of New Orleans. Hughes spoke about what he called “unresolved poverty and racial issues”⁵⁶⁰ in New Orleans. He attested, “It was often the poorest of the poor, too often black, who either did not have the means to evacuate or did not have anywhere to go.”⁵⁶¹ He referenced the awful social and economic conditions these communities faced before the storm and further emphasized the sad reality was that black New

⁵⁵⁸ “New Orleans Charities CEO testifies on need for city’s mixed-income housing,” *Clarion Herald*, January 21, 2006, 7, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁵⁹ Stephanie Houston Grey, “(Re) Imagining Ethnicity in the City of New Orleans: Katrina’s Geographical Allegory,” in *Seeking Higher Ground: The Hurricane Katrina Crisis, Race, and Public Policy Reader*, ed. Manning Marable (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 133.

⁵⁶⁰ Father William Maestri, “Dr. King’s belief was in only one race-the human race,” *Clarion Herald*, January 21, 2006, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Orleanians, “found themselves further victimized by the horrendous series of events which ensued in their devastated homes awaiting rescue or in woefully underequipped emergency shelters.”⁵⁶² Father William Maestri also struck back at Nagin’s address, arguing that in the post-Katrina moment it has become exceedingly important to think of ways to unite the city; he concluded that “unfortunately Mayor Ray Nagin had not understood this fundamental requirement for rebuilding New Orleans.”⁵⁶³

On February 2, 2006, just months after Hurricane Katrina, Archbishop Alfred Hughes issued a joint statement crafted by a coalition of New Orleans-area clergy leaders. The interfaith and interracial group, organized by Catholic Archbishop Alfred Hughes, included Evangelical, Muslim, Catholic, Jewish, and Orthodox religious leaders from across the city. On that day, religious leaders gathered on the steps of the Franklin Avenue Baptist Church to urge the city’s leadership to move quicker in the recovery effort and to avoid divisive language during the rebuilding process. Archbishop Hughes stated, “We want to make sure that strident voices that tend to be racially divisive or focus on the negative in their report don’t undermine the possibility of our coming together as a community in support of a single master plan.”

⁵⁶² Ibid., 2.

⁵⁶³ Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day in post-Katrina New Orleans,” *Clarion Herald*, January 21, 2006, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Father William Maestri, “Dr. King’s belief was in only one race—the human race,” *Clarion Herald*, January 21, 2006, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁶⁴ The statement implored their respective parishioners to turn their attention toward building a ‘new’ New Orleans that would be “welcoming, inclusive and just.”⁵⁶⁵ Because of the magnitude of the destruction caused by Katrina, New Orleanians could no longer allow or tolerate “patterns of life that divide it according to race or class.”⁵⁶⁶ The coalition called on government officials to cease their racially divisive language and for community members to participate in a well-crafted plan to help their fellow New Orleanians rebuild. Hughes and his coalition of religious leaders invited “all former residents, African American, Caucasian, Asian American, Hispanic, Native American, rich and poor,” to return to New Orleans. In the true spirit of interracial action and social justice, the interracial religious coalition affirmed that “we are and want to be a community that welcomes people of every race, ethnic background, economic status and religious faith in mutual respect and harmony.”⁵⁶⁷ The collaboration of interfaith leaders displayed a clear commitment to interracial and interfaith action.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ Bruce Nolan, “Religious Leaders Urge Honest Talk on Recovery-Stop Bickering and get to Work, they say,” *Times-Picayune*, February 3, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

⁵⁶⁵ Alfred C. Hughes, “The new New Orleans Must Not Repeat Past Injustices,” *Clarion Herald*, February 11, 2006, 5, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁶⁷ Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, “Discerning God’s will for our Archdiocese,” *Clarion Herald*, February 18, 2006, 2, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁶⁸ Washington (CNS), “Churches Offer Forum for Katrina Displaced to be Heard,” *Clarion Herald*, March 2006, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

The collaboration of Catholic organizations in the rebuilding effort reaffirmed the Catholic Church's commitment to Catholic interracial action. In May of 2006, Providence Community Housing, a nonprofit organization and consortium of organizations within the Archdiocese of New Orleans put forth a five-year plan to develop and operate 6,500 units of diverse mixed-income housing. The organizations under Providence Community Housing included the Catholic Charities, Christopher Homes, St. Peter Claver, UJAMMA, St. Joseph's/Tulane-Canal CDC, and Reconcile New Orleans. Dennis Adams, the Executive Director of Christopher Homes, the archdiocesan housing arm, stated, "We will be where the people are. That's what the Archbishop said. The Church will be where the people are."⁵⁶⁹

Emblematic of the Church's commitment to interracial activity, St. Peter Claver/UJAMAA was a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting low-to-moderate income families living in the historic Treme district of the city.⁵⁷⁰ Ujamma, "a word derived from East African K-Swahili connotes a process where all members of a community work together as an extended family to build and maintain a cohesive community that nurtures and supports its residents."⁵⁷¹ Father Michael Jacques, pastor

⁵⁶⁹ Kenneth J. Lacho, Tammy Parker and Kristie Carter, "Economic Development Initiative of African Americans in Treme: The Oldest African American Neighborhood in the United States," *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research* 6, no. 2 (January 2005): 92-93.

⁵⁷⁰ Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, "Partnerships and Collaborations," *Clarion Herald*, 2006, 16, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁷¹ Kenneth J. Lacho, Tammy Parker and Kristie Carter, "Economic Development Initiative of African Americans in Treme: The Oldest African American

of St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, started the organization ten years before Katrina hit New Orleans.⁵⁷² The St. Joseph's/Tulane-Canal CDC's mission was to build homes for low-to moderate income families in the Tulane/Canal neighborhood. They worked with their clients through all phases of the home-buying process, and they also worked to help families become mortgage worthy. Reconcile New Orleans or Café Reconcile is a nonprofit restaurant that served not only food, but also provided an eight-week program, including life skills and occupational skills training for students. Providence affiliate member organizations included MQVC, featured in the previous section the Hispanic Apostolate, the Sisters of the Holy Family, AFL-CIO, and the Order of Malta. Although working in concert, these affiliate groups served a diverse set of New Orleanians. Chief Executive Office of Catholic Charities, James R. Kelly asserted that, "as a Church we are about the ministry of allowing people of all faiths, all cultures and all backgrounds to come home to their churches, to their families and to their neighborhoods."⁵⁷³

In a July 8, 2006 issue of the *Clarion Herald*, Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes asked his parishioners to donate money to the Black and Indian Mission Collection. The Black and Indian Commission was authorized by the Catholic Church in 1884 to

Neighborhood in the United States," *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research* 6, no. 2 (January 2005): 92-93.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 92-93.

⁵⁷³ Ron Brocato, "Catholic Entities Band Together to Launch Housing Efforts" *Clarion Herald*, May 6, 2006, 6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Greg Thomas, "Companies Join Forces to Add to N.O. Housing-Development Arm of Church Seeking to Win Tax Credits," *Times Picayune*, May 12, 2006, 1, NewsBank.

provide support for the black and Native American communities, and it continued to do so well into the 21st century. Following Hurricane Katrina and Rita, the African American and Native American communities needed more assistance to help them rebuild their homes, schools, and churches. Hughes stated, “Let this year be a special one for the Black and Indian Collection—that we all may share in the rebuilding efforts of the Church that suffered so very much with the hurricanes.”⁵⁷⁴ The Josephites, long dedicated to servicing the African American community, echoed the sentiments of Archbishop Hughes. The Josephites decided to use the storm as an opportunity to “invite African-American men into the work in the vineyard of the Lord.” They reminded Catholics that the job of building an equitable society and a multiracial church was not yet complete.⁵⁷⁵

The archdiocesan plan for recovery proved extremely successful in helping religious institutions in New Orleans recover. By August of that year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Housing Authority of New Orleans chose Providence to redevelop the Lafitte Public Housing units. The organization vowed to work closely with Lafitte and Treme residents to achieve several goals:

To plan a vibrant community that is equitable, affordable and sustainable . . . to provide the opportunity for the nearly 865 families and individuals who lived in the Lafitte development prior to Katrina to return to better quality

⁵⁷⁴ Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, “Archbishop asks support for Black, Indian Mission Collection,” *Clarion Herald*, July 8, 2006, 5, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁷⁵ Father Peter J. Daly, “Katrina has given Josephite Parishes New Purpose,” *Clarion Herald*, July 29, 2006, 9, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

housing. They also sought to integrate mixed-income housing around the city.⁵⁷⁶

Archbishop Hughes committed the Catholic Church to doing all they could, “to make it possible for anyone who previously lived in New Orleans to come back” stating, “we need to develop a community that is more welcoming to people of different races and economic backgrounds.”⁵⁷⁷

The Catholic Church on Interracial Cooperation, and Racism Post-Katrina

In December 2006, a little over 15 months after Katrina, New Orleans Archbishop Alfred Hughes released his pastoral letter, “Racial Harmony: ‘Made in the Image of God.’” The release of his letter came 50 years after New Orleans Archbishop Joseph Rummel released his revolutionary pastoral letter, “The Morality of Racial Segregation,” where he proclaimed that, “racial segregation as such is morally wrong and sinful because it is a denial of the unity-solidarity of the human race as conceived by God in the creation of Adam and Eve.”⁵⁷⁸ As discussed earlier, during the desegregation efforts of the 50s and early 60s, Archbishop Rummel

⁵⁷⁶ “Providence Chosen to Redevelop Lafitte Public Housing,” *Clarion Herald*, August 26, 2006, 24, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; Peter Finney, “Archbishop Hughes sees recovery as a regional effort,” *Clarion Herald*, August 26, 2006, 4, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁷⁷ “Providence Chosen to Redevelop Lafitte Public Housing,” *Clarion Herald*, August 26, 2006, 24, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; “Agencies, religious team to serve poor in New Orleans,” *Clarion Herald*, August 26, 2006, 27, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁷⁸ Archbishop Joseph Rummel, “The Morality of Racial Segregation,” *Pastoral Letter*, February 11, 1956. *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

suffered white backlash as white Catholic segregationists made it difficult for Catholic interracial action to succeed in dismantling Jim Crow segregation in Catholic schools and facilities. Then, as well as earlier and later in the 20th century, the Church struggled to facilitate truly interracial action based on Catholic doctrine and achieved only moderate success. Following Hurricane Katrina, Archbishop Alfred Hughes thought it necessary to reiterate the words of Rummel and to propose new directives on racism, racial harmony, and interracial collaboration based on Catholic doctrine.

Catholic officials in the Church agreed wholeheartedly with Archbishop Hughes' views on racism and racial reconciliation in the 21st century and particularly in the post-Katrina moment. Before Hughes released his pastoral letter, Walter Bonam, then director of the Institute of Catechetics and Spirituality of the Archdiocesan Religious Education Office, contributed an article to the *Clarion Herald* that implored his fellow Catholics to take heed of Hughes' letter once it was released. In reference to persistent racism, Bonam demanded that the Catholic Church "acknowledge its presence and confront it with the full power of God's grace, as given to us especially through the sacraments and the marvelous teaching of our church."⁵⁷⁹

According to interracial justice scholar Eric K. Yamamoto, there are four dimensions of an "approach for inquiring into and acting on intergroup tensions

⁵⁷⁹ Walter Bonam, "Catholics Must Acknowledge, Confront, Exorcise Racism," *Clarion Herald*, December 9, 2016, 4, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

marked both by conflict and distrust and by a desire for peaceable and productive relations.”⁵⁸⁰ The first dimension, recognition, calls for an acknowledgement of human suffering and an attempt to assess the cause of the suffering. The second, responsibility, asks racial groups to take stock of group agency and to take responsibility for racial wounds. This dimension takes into consideration what Yamamoto terms, “the historical roots of many contemporary interracial conflicts and examines the hurtful action of a group toward other groups.”⁵⁸¹ The third dimension, reconstruction, is performative in that it warrants an apology by the responsible party and the forgiveness of the party by the abused. The last and final dimension is reparation, which “encompasses both acts of repairing damage to the material conditions of racial group life and of restoring injured human psyches.”⁵⁸² Yamamoto argued that reparation symbolizes a condemnation of exploitation and the hope for a more just society.

Archbishop Alfred Hughes’s pastoral statement on racial harmony, which was published a year after Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, personified Yamamoto’s four dimensions of interracial justice, but from a faith-based perspective. Archbishop Hughes’ pastoral letter brought to bear the church’s long complicity in racism and called for a social justice plan built on Catholic doctrine and racial harmony. His statement was both a pronouncement of the possibilities of

⁵⁸⁰ Eric K. Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict & Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 174.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 174-175.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 175.

Catholic interracial cooperation and a critique of the previous limitations of interracial action as a result of covert and institutional racism within the church and society.

Archbishop Hughes' asserted that although similar to the racial issues Archbishop Rummel confronted fifty years prior, New Orleans now had a, "new situation," in the post-Katrina moment:

The painful suffering that gripped us along with the devastating flood water has brought home the still unaddressed issues which weigh heavily upon us: the unacceptably high rate of poverty among African Americans; the limited choices in education because of the failing public schools; the disproportionate percentages without health insurance; the difficulty in finding adequate affordable housing.⁵⁸³

The Archbishop called for racial collaboration imbued in Catholic social justice doctrine. The rebuilding effort for Archbishop Hughes needed to be characterized by cooperation across racial lines. Archbishop Hughes expressed the hope that the release of his letter would catalyze Catholics and society to confront "the truth about race from a faith perspective."⁵⁸⁴

Archbishop Hughes took responsibility for the church's complicity in institutional racism and apologized, or in Yamamoto's words, "reached out in concrete ways to heal."⁵⁸⁵ Hughes said, "Institutional racism is also experienced in the Church. While the Church as the Body of Christ is holy in her Divine Head, the

⁵⁸³ Archbishop Alfred Hughes, "Made in the Image and Likeness of God: Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony," *Clarion Herald*, December 16, 2006, 1-8, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

⁵⁸⁵ Eric K. Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict & Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 191.

Church in her members can and do sin.”⁵⁸⁶ Archbishop Hughes continued, “When members, whether in leadership or not, treat other racial or cultural expressions as inferior or unwelcome, they contribute to an institutional form of racism within the Church—for which we must continually repent and ask forgiveness.”⁵⁸⁷ He apologized for the failed actions of the church in the past and present and sought forgiveness for the church’s transgressions. Hughes urged his flock to abstain from language or actions that embolden disharmony and noted that for racial harmony to prevail, it will be imperative that those “who have experienced personal or systemic hurt move to forgiveness and the healing of past memories.”⁵⁸⁸ In keeping with Yamamoto’s final dimension, reparation, Hughes condemned “crude and blatant expressions of racist sentiment,” and what he called “indifference that replaces open hatred.”⁵⁸⁹ Hughes concluded his pastoral letter with these optimistic words:

I pray that we might, as a Church and a community, become a place welcoming to linguistically, racially and culturally diverse people, a place of beauty, a place of safety, a place of peace, a place for spiritual enrichment and renewal. God grant us the grace, the wisdom and the courage to realize this vision.⁵⁹⁰

Archbishop Hughes expressed the hope that the Office of Worship, the Office of Black Catholics, the Hispanic Apostolate, and the Asian Catholic leadership could

⁵⁸⁶ Archbishop Alfred Hughes, “Made in the Image and Likeness of God: Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony,” *Clarion Herald*, December 16, 2006, 1-8, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

⁵⁸⁸ Archbishop Alfred Hughes, “Made in the Image and Likeness of God: Pastoral Letter on Racial Harmony,” *Clarion Herald*, December 16, 2006, 1-8, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

collaborate to advance racially diverse liturgies that would display the heritage and customs of all Catholic people. Like his predecessor Archbishop Rummel, Archbishop Hughes' plan for ending racism in the 21st century emphasized interracial activity guided by Catholic doctrine. For the Archbishop, the impact of Hurricane Katrina cut across racial lines, thus providing the perfect atmosphere for the reinvigoration of Catholic interracial collaboration.⁵⁹¹

At a press conference in the aptly named Archbishop Rummel Room of Notre Dame, members of the press and other church officials in attendance questioned Archbishop Hughes about his motivations to release "Racial Harmony: 'Made in the Likeness of God.'" Archbishop Hughes put forth three reasons why he felt compelled to release the letter at the time he did: first he sought to reemphasize the Gospel teaching on racial equality; second, he called for interracial dialogue on issues in society and in the Church that he believed to be unresolved; and finally, he sought to establish a tangible set of "action steps" at each level of the Catholic community.⁵⁹²

Conclusion

In the wake of the storm, the Catholic Church became an invaluable part of the city's recovery. Although the Catholic Church witnessed unprecedented damage to its church and school infrastructures as a consequence of Katrina's high waters and

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 1-8; Archbishop Alfred Hughes, "One Church of Jesus Christ," *Clarion Herald*, December 23, 2006, 3, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁹² Peter Finney Jr., "Archbishop Calls for True Dialogue on Interracial Issues," *Clarion Herald*, December 23, 2006, 3, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

heavy winds, church officials were still among a small group of first responders. The failures of the federal and local governments post-Katrina and the long history of Catholic interracial doctrine and action provided the perfect environment for the Catholic Church to recommit itself to Catholic interracial organizing.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, black Catholics sought a national standing with other black Catholics because of the scattered state of their parishes and communities. As early as 1913, Thomas Wyatt Turner, black Catholic layman from Maryland, penned letters to the Church hierarchy urging it to take a stand on racial discrimination and segregation in the Catholic Church. He founded the Committee Against the Extension of Race Prejudice in the Catholic Church in 1919 and later changed the name to the Committee for the Advancement of Colored Catholics. From this group, Turner established the Federation of Colored Catholics (FCC) in 1925. The organization saw itself as a federation of black societies and black parishes, a force that formed a national black Catholic front. However, theoretical differences among the group's white and black leadership regarding the organization's approach and structure split the organization in early 1930s. Catholic interracial organizing replaced black national organizing as the main strategy for working toward racial justice in the Catholic Church.⁵⁹³ Liberal Jesuit priest, Rev. John LaFarge established the Catholic Interracial Council in New York, which would serve as the base for national interracial movement.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ Ronald L. Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 128-129.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

In 1953, Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel of New Orleans emerged as an opponent of racial injustice and racial segregation in the Catholic Church. In a February 1956 statement to Catholics, Rummel proclaimed that racial segregation was “morally wrong and sinful.”⁵⁹⁵ His words anticipated those of American bishops, who in 1958 issued “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience,” which dealt with the issues of reconciling racial segregation in the Church with Christian doctrine. The bishops asserted that, “legal segregation, or any form of compulsory segregation, in itself and by its very nature imposes a stigma of inferiority upon the segregated people.”⁵⁹⁶ Although Rummel’s and the bishops’ words proved to be a step in the right direction for the Catholic Church, white Catholic dissent in state government and among white priests in the diocese, along with the fear of losing white members, slowed the campaign for integration in Catholic New Orleans. Although Pope Pius XII fully supported Rummel’s call for desegregation, the White Citizens Council formed throughout the diocese in the 1950s. White resistance continued into the early 1960s, when Rummel finally took a forceful stand with his excommunication of three leading anti-integrationist leaders. Still, the Church’s failures in the local and national civil rights movements and its stifling of black self-determination led to much disillusionment in black Catholic New Orleans. In the following year, American

⁵⁹⁵ John Wicklein, “Catholic Archbishop Backs New Orleans Integration: Rummel Will Act Despite Protests,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 1959, <https://www.nytimes.com/1959/07/08/archives/catholic-archbishop-backs-new-orleans-integration-rummel-will-act.html>

⁵⁹⁶ Statement of American Bishops of the United States, “Discrimination and the Christian Conscience,” 1958, 2, *Most Rev. Joseph Rummel Collection, 1931-1961*, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.

bishops established the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ) as a national service organization representing local interracial councils. In 1963, as the Church moved into the turbulent decade amidst the national exposure of the Civil Rights Movement, the NCCIJ formed the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago, IL. Later that year, the American bishops issued a joint statement on racial harmony in the Church. Several priests and nuns also participated in the March on Washington on August 28, which marked the first public appearance of the Catholic Church in the Civil Rights Movement. Also in that year, the North American Federation of the Third Order of St. Francis honored MLK Jr.'s SCLC for their contributions to interracial action. The Church ordained and appointed to Church offices an unprecedented number of black priests over the course of the 1960s. In 1964, Rev. Clarence Joseph River became the first black diocesan priest ordained in Cincinnati, Ohio, and in the same year Rev. Harold Robert Perry became the first black provincial of the Southern Province of the Divine Word Missionaries. At an April meeting of the Midwest Clergy Conference on Negro Welfare, Harold Perry implored black pastors to get involved with the Civil Rights Movement. Two years later, Harold Perry became Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans and became the first black bishop stationed in the United States since Bishop James Healy in 1900.⁵⁹⁷ The Catholic Church's regional approach to social justice and its proclivity in the civil rights movement toward interracialism consequently stifled a national movement of

⁵⁹⁷ Ronald L. Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States: A Historical Chronology," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 132-134.

black self-determination. Disillusioned with the Church's lack of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, several black priests, such as Father Tom Honore, left the priesthood and joined secular civic organizations like ULGNO.⁵⁹⁸

In the late 1960s, the Black Power Movement had a massive impact on society at large, which meant that the Catholic Church was not impervious to its effects. The Black Power Movement's assertion of black self-determination inspired civil rights organizations like SNCC and CORE to abandon their commitment to interracialism, but the Catholic Church remained steadfast in its support of interracial action; however, the Church also recognized the need for black Catholic organizations that could better communicate the needs of the black Catholic community. In the late 1960s, Anthony J. Delgado founded the Council of Catholic Negro Laymen in Cleveland Ohio. A year later black priests established the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC) at a secret committee meeting at the Catholic Clergy Conference on the Interracial Apostolate. The organization was created immediately after the assassination of MLK Jr. on April 4, 1968. Patricia Grey Tyree, the only sister to attend the secret Black Clergy Caucus meeting founded the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC). From 1969-1979 black Catholic laymen and priests organized two more black Catholic organizations, the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association (NBCSA) and the National Black Lay Caucus (NBLCC). In 1970, the NBSC, NBCC and the NBLCC came together to form the National Office for Black Catholics (NOBC). Black Catholics finally had a national organization of

⁵⁹⁸ Tom Honore, *Grace at Every Turn*,” (Bloomington: Xilbris Corporation, 2004).

black Catholic priests and lay parishioners who were committed to the betterment of their condition. Due in part to their uneven dispersal across the US, black Catholics had always clamored for a national movement.⁵⁹⁹

In the 1970s, during the Vietnam War, the church condemned both the war and communism. The Catholic Church did in fact feel the effects of the Cold War as Vietnamese Catholics arrived in the US in 1975 having fled war and religious persecution. After spending some time in refugee camps in the northeast and mid-west, the Catholic Church and a number of other religious organizations settled the Vietnamese in locales like Los Angeles and New Orleans. These were predominantly Vietnamese enclaves already established by early Vietnamese refugees. The New Orleans branch of the Catholic Charities settled roughly 3,000 Vietnamese refugees in the city in 1975. The Catholic Charities, however, had no concrete plan for relocating or integrating the Vietnamese, and with no way to stem the tide of chain migration, the Church participated in the displacement of blacks in employment sectors and housing in New Orleans East.⁶⁰⁰ The 1980s ended with a national push for the incorporation of black folk culture into Catholic services. The post-Katrina moment would once again set the stage for a discussion of the possibilities of Catholic interracial organizing, and Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes would draw on draw on the

⁵⁹⁹ Ronald L. Sharps, "Black Catholics in the United States: A Historical Chronology," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1994) 132-134.

⁶⁰⁰ Danielle Dreilinger, "40 Years After Saigon Fell, Vietnamese at Home in New Orleans," *Times Picayune*, April 30, 2015, https://www.nola.com/news/environment/article_2f585b93-573e-59dc-8297-46d1772b6af9.html

examples put forth by his predecessors that reaffirmed the importance of Catholic interracial doctrine and action as well as black self-determination in the struggle for racial harmony and racial and class equity.

It is important to remember that over the course of the twentieth century the Catholic Church experienced its own struggle for black civil rights within its respective institutions. Despite the fact that history privileges the tactics used in the larger Protestant-led Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, it is crucial to examine other religious-based methods of protest. Both groups experienced varying degrees of success and at times both Protestants and Catholics acquiesced, although unwillingly, to the status quo. Nevertheless, my study reminds us of the importance of the activism of religious institutions in times of crisis. American Catholicism struggled with race throughout much of the twentieth century by denying African Americans self-determination in the struggle for black civil rights. They have since corrected their approach and discovered new ways of implementing Catholic interracialism successfully. My discussion of Catholic interracialism from the early twentieth century to the post-Katrina moment has larger implications for the present moment. As New Orleans continues to rebuild post-Katrina, my study warns against the pitfalls of immigrant relocation and the failure to facilitate immigrant reception during the resettlement process. In the post-Katrina moment, the Church must continue to bridge the gap between African Americans and newly arriving immigrant communities in order to stave off resentment and division. The Church must take up where the federal and local governments fall short, and they must continue to act as

an anchor when crises occur. This work reaffirms that in order to have a comprehensive history on the black freedom struggle in the U.S., we must take into consideration the successes and limitations of Catholic interracial organizing throughout the twentieth century, for it has real life implications for the current moment.

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