



FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE

“BE NOT AFRAID?”

**Guilt by Association, Catholic McCarthyism
and Growing Threats to the U.S. Bishops’
Anti-Poverty Mission**

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INTRODUCTION: GROWING THREATS TO THE CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (CCHD)

Over the past four decades, conservative Catholic activists and their ideological allies on the political right have worked to undermine the U.S. Catholic bishops' most successful anti-poverty initiative — the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). In recent years, these efforts have grown more intense and effective. A small, but well-financed network has emerged as a relentless opponent of the bishops' social justice Campaign, which has long been recognized as one of the most influential funders of grassroots community organizing. This year alone, CCHD is funding 214 organizations across the country with over \$9 million in grants.¹ Using guilt by association and other tactics from the McCarthy-era playbook, these activists are part of an increasingly aggressive movement of Catholic culture warriors who view themselves as fighting for a smaller, "purer" church.

The American Life League — a Stafford, Va.-based organization with a \$6 million budget — describes itself as the largest grassroots Catholic pro-life organization in the country. In 2009, it launched a "Reform CCHD Now" coalition.² More than two dozen supporting groups are members, including Human Life International, ChurchMilitant.TV and Catholic Advocate. The coalition exists, in its words, to document cases of Catholic funding going to groups that promote "abortion, birth control, homosexuality, and even Marxism."³

The American Life League uses its resources to produce exposé-style reports and videos that are sent to every bishop in the country, and calls for boycotts of parish collections that fund the Campaign.⁴ Its latest report claims that 72 CCHD-funded organizations are violating Catholic moral teaching.⁵ In one video — "Robbing Peter to Pay Saul: How a Corrupt Social 'Gospel,' Including CCHD, Promotes Evil under the Guise of Justice," — an official for the League vows to hold "enemies of the Catholic Church" accountable.⁶ The League and local allies such as Cleveland Right to Life are putting at risk vital anti-poverty work and creating a culture of fear around community organizing, according to interviews conducted over several months with community development experts, non-profit directors and national philanthropic leaders.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST CCHD IS HAVING A CORROSIVE AND GROWING IMPACT:

- The *Land Stewardship Project*, a Minnesota non-profit that for five consecutive years received church funds, abruptly lost a \$48,000 CCHD grant to help immigrant farmers in 2012 because of an association with the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and TakeAction Minnesota. Those two groups work on diverse social justice issues supported by Catholic teaching, but did not endorse the Minnesota bishops' efforts to fight same-sex marriage. The stewardship project does not work on marriage issues and never took a position on the state's 2012 marriage ballot initiative.⁷
- *Compañeros*, a small non-profit in rural southwestern Colorado that helps immigrants with basic social services and legal aid, lost church funds that amounted to half of its budget because of its association with a statewide immigrant rights coalition that included a single gay and lesbian advocacy group. *Compañeros* did not and does not work on gay rights issues.⁸
- In 2012-13 alone, five affiliates of the *Gamaliel Foundation* — one of the nation's largest networks of faith-based community organizers — lost CCHD funds.⁹



- At various times in recent years, at least eight Catholic dioceses have dropped the annual CCHD collection in parishes.¹⁰

The stepped-up campaign against CCHD is draining resources from critical social justice advocacy at a time when more than 1 in 5 children live in poverty and income inequality is the most severe it has been since the 1920s.¹¹ An equally troubling impact is the potential chilling effect on the church's involvement with diverse anti-poverty coalitions. In March of 2013, two members of the CCHD Advisory Board in the Diocese of Cleveland resigned in protest because of rigid CCHD funding protocols that in the words of one former board member "value conformity over dialogue...and make lists that exclude rather than act to promote understanding of the common good."¹²

In a 2011 memo, the two bishops who chair the CCHD subcommittee at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington wrote that American Life League officials "simply do not agree with CCHD's mission and how we apply our guidelines and requirements." The memo, which was sent to every bishop in the country, went on to note that grant awards are based on the judgment of local bishops and the vetting process of each diocese, "not the repeated accusations of those with clear ideological and ecclesial agendas."¹³

DESPITE EFFORTS TO DERAIL CCHD, THE CAMPAIGN STILL REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR COLLECTIONS IN THE U.S. CHURCH

According to the U.S. bishops' conference, the Campaign has "contributed over \$280 million to more than 7,800 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods" since its founding in 1970.¹⁴

CCHD funds an array of organizations and projects that empower low-income people. These efforts include:

- The *Coalition of Immokalee Workers*, led by Latino and Haitian farmworkers in Florida, which has negotiated agreements with major fast food chains like Taco Bell to

increase wages and improve working conditions for their members who pick tomatoes in conditions that human rights groups have decried as modern-day slavery.

- *Communities Organized for Public Service*, which has fought for over \$1 billion in public projects in San Antonio to improve housing, education and job training for its low-income members.
- *PICO National Network* — a congregation-based community organizing network founded by a Jesuit Catholic priest — received CCHD funding as part of nearly \$1 million in "special grants" U.S. bishops' approved in March 2013 to mobilize Catholics to support passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

Retired Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, who as a young priest marched with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and was president of the U.S. bishops' conference from 1998-2001, urges church leaders to stand up to the American Life League and other critics more boldly. Archbishop Fiorenza notes that church funds should never go to organizations that directly support causes that contradict Catholic teaching. But in an interview the archbishop emphasized that the ability to work in broad coalition with and fund groups that share common goals — even if there is disagreement on some issues — is critical.¹⁵

“At a time when poverty is growing and people are hurting we should not withdraw from our commitment to helping the poor. Catholic identity is far broader than opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage. Catholic identity is a commitment to living the Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it, and this must include a commitment to those in poverty.”

— Archbishop Emeritus Joseph A. Fiorenza
President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops,
1998-2001

CCHD ATTACKS PART OF A BROADER TREND

Threats to anti-poverty work are part of a toxic climate of fear in which efforts to narrow Catholic identity to a few hot-button issues distort the debate over Catholic values in public life, and social justice advocates face character assassination.

The most vociferous critics of CCHD have a history of waging personal attacks against individual bishops and staff at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington. Judie Brown, the founder and president of the American Life League, accused Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley of taking part in a "scandal" for presiding at the funeral of the late Sen. Ted Kennedy in 2009. "If this funeral Mass proceeds as planned, Senator Edward Kennedy will have spit one more time on Christ, this time from a casket," Brown wrote to Cardinal O'Malley.¹⁶ Her organization sold "Bury Obamacare with Kennedy" signs just days after the senator died.

Responding to the American Life League and other conservative critics who protested his presence at Sen. Kennedy's funeral, Cardinal O'Malley wrote on his blog:

At times, even in the Church, zeal can lead people to issue harsh judgments and impute the worst motives to one another. These attitudes and practices do irreparable damage to the communion of the Church. If any cause is motivated by judgment, anger or vindictiveness, it will be doomed to marginalization and failure.¹⁷

The League also went after John Carr, a nationally respected leader who served as executive director of the U.S. bishops' Justice, Peace and Human Development office for more than 20 years. Brown's organization accused Carr of being part of "a systematic pattern of cooperation with evil" because he once sat on the board of the Center for Community Change, an organization that the American Life League claims supports abortion rights and same-sex marriage.¹⁸ At the time, Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Center, NY, described the smear campaign against Carr as a "very, sad, sad commentary on the honesty of some people in these pressure groups."¹⁹

CONSIDER A FEW RECENT ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF THIS NEW LANDSCAPE:

- Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' international relief and development agency, has faced sustained attacks from several conservative Catholic web sites for its funding of the humanitarian organization CARE, which LifeSiteNews.com describes as a "contraception-providing charity" that is "pro-abortion." The grant was used for water and sanitation programs in Central American countries.²⁰
- The Cardinal Newman Society launched a petition drive against Gonzaga University for inviting the anti-apartheid hero and Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu to give a commencement address. The Newman Society described the world renowned global justice leader as "a pro-abortion rights, pro-contraception Anglican."²¹
- From its studios in suburban Detroit, ChurchMilitant.TV is working to "expose" "traitorous" nuns, priests and other Catholics. "We're no more engaged in a witch hunt than a doctor excising a cancer is engaged in a witch hunt," executive producer Michael Voris told the Associated Press.²²

America, a national Catholic magazine edited by Jesuit priests, captured the prevailing mood well in an editorial:

In the United States today, self-appointed watchdogs of orthodoxy, like Randall Terry and the Cardinal Newman Society, push mightily for a pure church quite unlike the mixed community of saints and sinners — the Catholic Church — that Augustine championed...they thrive on slash-and-burn tactics...They scorn Augustine's inclusive, forgiving, big-church Catholics...Their tactics, and their attitudes, threaten the unity of the Catholic Church in the United States, the effectiveness of its mission and the credibility of its pro-life activities.²³



Todd Whitmore, a theology professor at the University of Notre Dame, argues that silence only emboldens ideological opponents of faith-based community organizing and hurts effective anti-poverty efforts.²⁴

“My sense is that the new Catholic McCarthy era will not end until there is straight talk from those who are disturbed by how some of our fellow Catholics are using faith as a bludgeon. The charge of ‘cafeteria Catholicism’ can run in more than one direction, and it can be applied to those who criticize CCHD until such critics can show that they are providing effective alternative ways to protect and promote the economic rights of the poor.”

— Todd Whitmore, Professor of Theology,
University of Notre Dame

Timothy Collins, director of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development from 2005-2007, has watched the far-right attacks become more vitriolic in recent years as blogs, YouTube and other online forums provide new avenues for targeting social justice advocacy.

“Is there anything Christian about this?” Collins asked. “Jesus drew rebukes from pious religious leaders of his time for eating with prostitutes, befriending outcasts and challenging the high priests who zealously guarded the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit. Groups like the American Life League might have good intentions. But in their doggedness to defend the faith they are losing sight of the liberating message of the Gospel and tarnishing the Catholic justice tradition.”²⁵

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CCHD

A brief history of the CCHD’s origin is instructive in setting the context for how the anti-poverty initiative continues to be a frequent target of slash-and-burn tactics at U.S. bishops’ resolutions creating the Campaign in 1969 called for the church to support efforts that would help the poor “develop economic strengths and political power...through specific projects aimed at eliminating the very causes of poverty.”²⁶

Catholic dioceses at the time were expanding urban ministries, developing social action offices and promoting racial justice projects in the wake of unrest in cities such as Los Angeles, Detroit and Newark. Just two years before the CCHD launched, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders named “white racism” as an underlying cause of violence in cities. Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit affirmed the report’s conclusions and called for urban strategies focused on housing, education and employment. Speaking as the president of the U.S. bishops’ conference just days after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, Cardinal Dearden pledged to raise \$1 million for the Detroit Archdiocesan Development Fund to make anti-poverty grants. “We do not intend to set up a program in any patronizing or paternalistic way that tells people what they need and provides it for them,” Dearden said. “We want to know what they need... They will tell us what they need.”²⁷

The U.S. bishops’ conference subsequently approved *A Statement on the National Race Crisis* and formed an Urban Task Force to be an “instrument of Catholic involvement in interreligious programs and civic programs to affect solutions to the twin crises of race and poverty.”²⁸ In 1969, the bishops’ annual Labor Day statement for the first time called for the church to make “a generous portion of its limited resources available for the development and the self-determination of the poor and powerless.” A year later, bishops passed a resolution creating the anti-poverty Campaign and designated the Sunday before Thanksgiving as the annual date for a collection in parishes. The first collection in 1970 raised more than \$8 million, the largest single collection in the Catholic Church in the United States at the time.²⁹

Conservatives denounced the Campaign immediately. A lead editorial in *Triumph*, a now defunct conservative Catholic magazine, called for the bishops to drop the Campaign unless they wanted to become “laughing stocks.”³⁰ The editorial said the bishops were trying to recreate President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” which had launched six years earlier. “Nothing is quite so ludicrous as an adventure that is utterly doomed to futility,” the editorial seethed. Thomas Pauken, while serving as a Reagan administration official in 1984, circulated a conspiracy-tinged document attacking the bishops’ Campaign as funding “leftist political activists plotting to destroy our economic system.”³¹

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CCHD

1969

The Campaign is launched as U.S. bishops approve a "National Catholic Crusade Against Poverty."

1974

CCHD releases a 208-page report, *Poverty in American Democracy: A Study of Social Power*, which criticizes growing wealth disparities.

1970

First collection raises more than \$8 million, the largest single collection in the church at the time.

1975

CCHD establishes the first no-interest economic development loan program for low-income, community-run businesses.

1994

The Campaign's annual collection exceeds \$13 million for the first time.

1989

Conservative Catholic and former Nixon Administration Treasury Secretary William E. Simon blasts the Campaign as a "funding mechanism for radical left political activism" in a letter to the influential Knights of Malta.

1979

Pope John Paul II, during his first U.S. visit, commends the Campaign for "removing the causes of poverty and not merely the evil effects of injustice."

2009

American Life League launches a "Reform CCHD Now" coalition and urges bishops to drop parish collections for the initiative.

2010

U.S. bishops adopt a "Review and Renewal" document for CCHD that emphasizes "stronger policies and clearer mechanisms" for grant making.

2011

In a memo to U.S. bishops, two bishops serving as CCHD subcommittee chairmen write that the American Life League "continues to attack CCHD" and "simply do not agree with CCHD's mission."

2012

Organizations focused on land stewardship and immigrant rights lose CCHD funds because of associations with other groups that support same-sex marriage.

William E. Simon, a conservative Catholic who had served as Treasury Secretary in the Nixon administration, sent a copy of the Pauken document to every U.S. member of the Knights of Malta, an influential network of Catholic benefactors. In a letter accompanying the report, Simon warned that the Campaign “is a funding mechanism for radical left political action in the United States, rather than for traditional types of Catholic Charities.”³² The Capitol Research Center, a conservative group in Washington founded by a former Reagan-era official, became a dogged foe. In a 126-page report released in 1988 entitled “The Campaign for Human Development: Christian Charity or Political Activism,” the Center wrote that the anti-poverty Campaign was “seeking to enhance communitarian socialism in the United States.”³³

The late Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, a prominent conservative intellectual and Catholic theologian who founded the journal *First Things*, said the bishops’ Campaign had “nothing to do with Catholicism” and called for its termination.³⁴ “No amount of housecleaning is going to make this arm of the USCCB worthy of our donations,” blogged Deal Hudson, a former Catholic outreach director for George W. Bush’s presidential campaigns.³⁵

WHAT IS CATHOLIC ABOUT COMMUNITY ORGANIZING?

Catholic critics of CCHD often argue that the church should focus on the delivery of charitable services rather than addressing social structures that perpetuate injustice. This view is not supported by a long history of Catholic social teaching, which emphasizes justice and charity as indivisible.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) that “justice is the primary way of charity.”³⁶ During a visit to the United States in 1979, Pope John Paul II praised the bishops’ Campaign for working to remove “the causes of poverty and not merely the evil effects of injustice.” He called CCHD “a witness to the Church’s living presence in the world among the most needy, and to her commitment to continuing the mission of Christ, who was sent ‘to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to the prisoners.’” (Luke 4:18-19.)³⁷

Speaking as president of the U.S. bishops’ conference, Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio called the Campaign “profoundly religious” during a 15th anniversary commemoration of the anti-poverty initiative.³⁸ He elaborated:

The Bible is specific about the treatment of the poor and the powerless in society...The person of Jesus, reflected in the parable of the sheep and goats (Mt 25) comes forward to us today not only singly but in groups, classes, and communities of people who are forced to live in conditions that impede them from experiencing full social participation and real human growth. These conditions often result from imbalances in political influence and economic power, and from discrimination based on racism and ethnic prejudice. Like

personal sins, such as selfishness and hatred, social sins must be named and rooted out. Rooting out structural injustices calls for a commitment to change analogous to that associated with personal conversion.

The mission of CCHD grows out of several key pillars of Catholic social teaching, including the *Life and Dignity of the Human Person*, the *Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable*, and the call to *Participation and Solidarity*. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “it is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person.”³⁹ The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, published by the Vatican in 2005, addresses the need to overcome cultural and social obstacles that “constitute real barriers to the shared participation of citizens in the destiny of their communities.”⁴⁰

CCHD DESCRIBES ITS REASON FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING THIS WAY:

*Community organizing puts Catholic social teaching principles into action when such efforts are geared toward protecting the dignity of the human person, ensuring that basic human rights are fulfilled, and inviting individuals and institutions to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Community organizing brings together people of varied socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds to work together in solidarity for the common good. It allows people who are poor and people who are not poor to work together to solve problems. When people who are poor take leadership and work to address their own situations, their human dignity is affirmed.*⁴¹

The Campaign is also rooted in the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, a concept frequently cited and misrepresented by conservative Catholic politicians and commentators.⁴² Subsidiarity acknowledges the importance of institutions and influences closest to those in need such as families, local agencies and churches, while also insisting that larger societal institutions also play a vital role in serving the common good. CCHD grant making rules require that organizations receiving funds have low-income citizens represented in decision-making roles. CCHD offers a “hand up, not a hand out” and “works from the bottom up, emphasizing self-help, participating and decision-making by poor people themselves to address their own situations,” according to the Campaign.⁴³

Ralph McCloud, CCHD Director at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, described the Campaign as doing “the work of the Gospel.”

“It’s true that empowering low-income people can be controversial, but this is unique and essential work that is in line with our Catholic tradition,” McCloud said.⁴⁴

AS CULTURE SHIFTS, THE CHURCH WARILY EYES SOCIAL JUSTICE COALITIONS

Community organizers and Catholic clergy who have worked on anti-poverty causes for decades speak about a significant shift in how the Catholic Church now views coalitions. Not long ago, Catholic leaders saw partnering with other faith-based and secular groups as essential to fighting for immigrants' rights, living wages, environmental justice and a host of other causes even if there was disagreement over hot-button issues. These partnerships still exist, but advocates say Catholic leaders are eyeing social justice coalitions and partnerships with increasing suspicion.

Aaron Dorfman, executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), spent more than a decade working for CCHD-funded organizations and with a network of Catholic churches on campaigns to empower low-income communities. Coalition work among groups that disagreed on issues was vital to achieving tangible public-policy victories on living wages, better schools and improved access to public transportation. Dorfman said the climate today is much less hospitable because of pressure groups like the American Life League that influence some in the Catholic hierarchy to back away from these strategic alliances.⁴⁵

“These trends are creating a culture of fear and making it increasingly difficult for community organizers and community groups to be part of broad-based coalitions that augment their power. People can’t partner with other groups that can help them win higher wages for poor people and other goals that are consistent with Catholic teaching. It’s a real problem that’s gotten worse in recent years.”

— Aaron Dorfman, Executive Director, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

Dorfman agrees that CCHD should not be funding activities that directly violate church teaching — an organization that distributes condoms, for example — but he worries that legitimate principles have morphed into rigid positions that leave little room for partnerships.

“Now it seems that you can’t even be associated with certain people or groups,” he said. “This is a fundamental and significant difference.”

This new posture also cuts against evidence collected in multi-year research from NCRP, which found that the most effective community organizing involves strategic alliances.⁴⁶

“One of the key findings is the biggest wins came in cases where there were robust coalitions and a variety of organizations working on an issue,” Dorfman said. “To the extent that this new shift inhibits coalition work, that’s going to make victories harder.”

In fact, the U.S. bishops’ original guidelines approved in 1972 did provide more room for church-funded organizations to partner with diverse groups, even those that were not aligned with church teaching on every issue.⁴⁷

Those rules were adopted in the wake of an early controversy the Campaign faced when a retired municipal court judge in Fairfield, Conn., made claims that “well over \$5 million” of CCHD money had gone or was scheduled to go to “organizations which participate in abortion and birth control programs.”⁴⁸ An investigation found the accusations were without merit.

Cardinal John Krol, president of the U.S. bishops’ conference at the time, addressed the funding issue by deciding that if the primary purpose of an organization’s program was opposed to Catholic teaching, it could not receive CCHD funds — even for a project within the organization that was in line with church teaching. However, if the primary purpose of a program was in line with church teaching, it could receive Campaign funds —

even if a tangential project was not in accord with Catholic moral teaching. The bishops adopted the Krol guidelines in 1972.⁴⁹

Dylan Corbett, the Mission Identity Outreach Manager for the U.S. bishops' Catholic Campaign for Human Development, acknowledges that church officials are becoming more cautious in some cases today.⁵⁰

"We support collaboration," Corbett said. "What has been difficult recently has been the nature of certain kinds of collaboration and cultural trends in our society." In part because of pressure from the American Life League, the bishops' national CCHD office issued stricter grant regulations in 2010 as part of a "Reform and Renewal" process that includes closer scrutiny of organizational relationships and coalitions.⁵¹

Public support for same-sex marriage has grown rapidly in just the past few years, including among Catholics. Data collected from Public Religion Research Institute show that across a range of issues regarding rights for gay and lesbian Americans, Catholics are more supportive than the general population and more supportive than any other Christian group.⁵² More organizations are now working on this issue as part of a broader social justice agenda. This development presents challenges for Catholic funding of groups that work in diverse coalitions.

Partly as a response to this trend and others, Corbett said, the bishops' anti-poverty Campaign is now giving priority to funding more Catholic organizations and organizations closely associated with dioceses. This seems to align with 2012 guidelines issued by the Vatican that John Allen of the *National Catholic Reporter* described as part of "a mounting campaign by church authorities to foster a stronger sense of traditional Catholic identity." The new rules, Allen wrote, "appear to tighten the scope for Catholic charities to collaborate with groups with whom they may share specific interests, but which also take positions that conflict with Catholic teaching."⁵³

Ralph McCloud, director of the Campaign, emphasized that partnerships and collaboration are vital. He declined to discuss specific cases in which CCHD funds have been pulled from organizations because of associations with another group or coalition that is not aligned with church teaching. McCloud said these cases often present complex situations where "prudential judgment" can be in the eye of the beholder. In the end, the final decisions about funding are left to diocesan bishops.⁵⁴

"Defunding is a painful and difficult process," McCloud said.

COMPLEX MORAL QUESTIONS AT STAKE

Rev. Bryan Massingale, a Marquette University theologian who has consulted widely with Catholic Charities USA and dioceses across the country, warns that Catholic leaders should not be hunkering down in ways that isolate the church. This can inhibit the church's practical efforts to empower the poor and serve as relevant moral leaders in a pluralistic society, he said.⁵⁵ Massingale noted that the U.S. bishops' anti-poverty Campaign was born in the years following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), an era that

propelled the church to strengthen interfaith dialogue, empower the laity and engage the modern world.

"There is now more wariness, suspicion and even condemnation of secular and civil society," Massingale said. "The church documents of Vatican II spoke about a dialogical relationship. There is now a more negative appraisal of forces outside the church, which reinforces a distinctive Catholic identity over and against the modern world."

“In our current heightened environment where secular society is always viewed as morally adrift and you see the need for a strong countervailing voice, you’re inclined to see this kind of traditional cooperation as impermissible compromise.”

— Rev. Bryan Massingale, *Professor of Theology*
Marquette University

Massingale, a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, sees a striking change in how some church leaders now interpret the classic theological concept of "cooperation with evil," which has a practical bearing on decisions to revoke CCHD grants. Organizations like *Compañeros* and the Land Stewardship Project lost church funding not because of direct advocacy for gay rights, but over their association with other groups.

Both intention and proximity matter when it comes to evaluating whether an act or association is deemed acceptable according to Catholic moral teaching. In the case of organizations that receive church funds with the primary goal of helping immigrants or creating more sustainable agriculture, an indirect association with an organization that departs from church teaching, for example, would not constitute "cooperation with evil," according to Massingale.

"Most moral theologians would say this level of cooperation is pretty remote and therefore permissible," he said.

Cris Doby, a program officer with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation who has worked for more than a decade on anti-poverty initiatives, agrees that church leaders should not isolate themselves from society. She has strong reservations about guilt-by-association defunding. But Doby also thinks caution is appropriate given what she calls the "complex moral questions" at stake with church funding.⁵⁶

"Coalitions are tricky things and unless they are very well defined up front they tend to drift," said Doby, who worked for CCHD and was a Social Action Director in several dioceses. "It's with good reason the bishops are skittish. CCHD money is a gift to them from Catholics in the pews. I don't know of any money that comes without strings attached."

Rev. John Coleman, S.J., an author and prominent lecturer at Catholic universities, counters that being in partnership with

individuals or organizations that don't agree with every Catholic position is essential to seeking justice.⁵⁷ He worries that some in the hierarchy are retreating from a long-established and effective model of collegiality. Coleman recalls being on a panel with the late Nobel Prize-winning economist James Tobin after the U.S. Catholic bishops released a major pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, in 1986.⁵⁸

"Tobin told me the bishops were the only ones who got it right because they talked to everyone. There was widespread consultation with that letter," said Coleman, an associate pastor at St. Ignatius Church in San Francisco and a retired professor at Loyola Marymount University whose books include *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought* and *Christian Political Ethics*.

“If you can only be in coalition with the so-called pure, your ability to work for the common good is seriously truncated.”

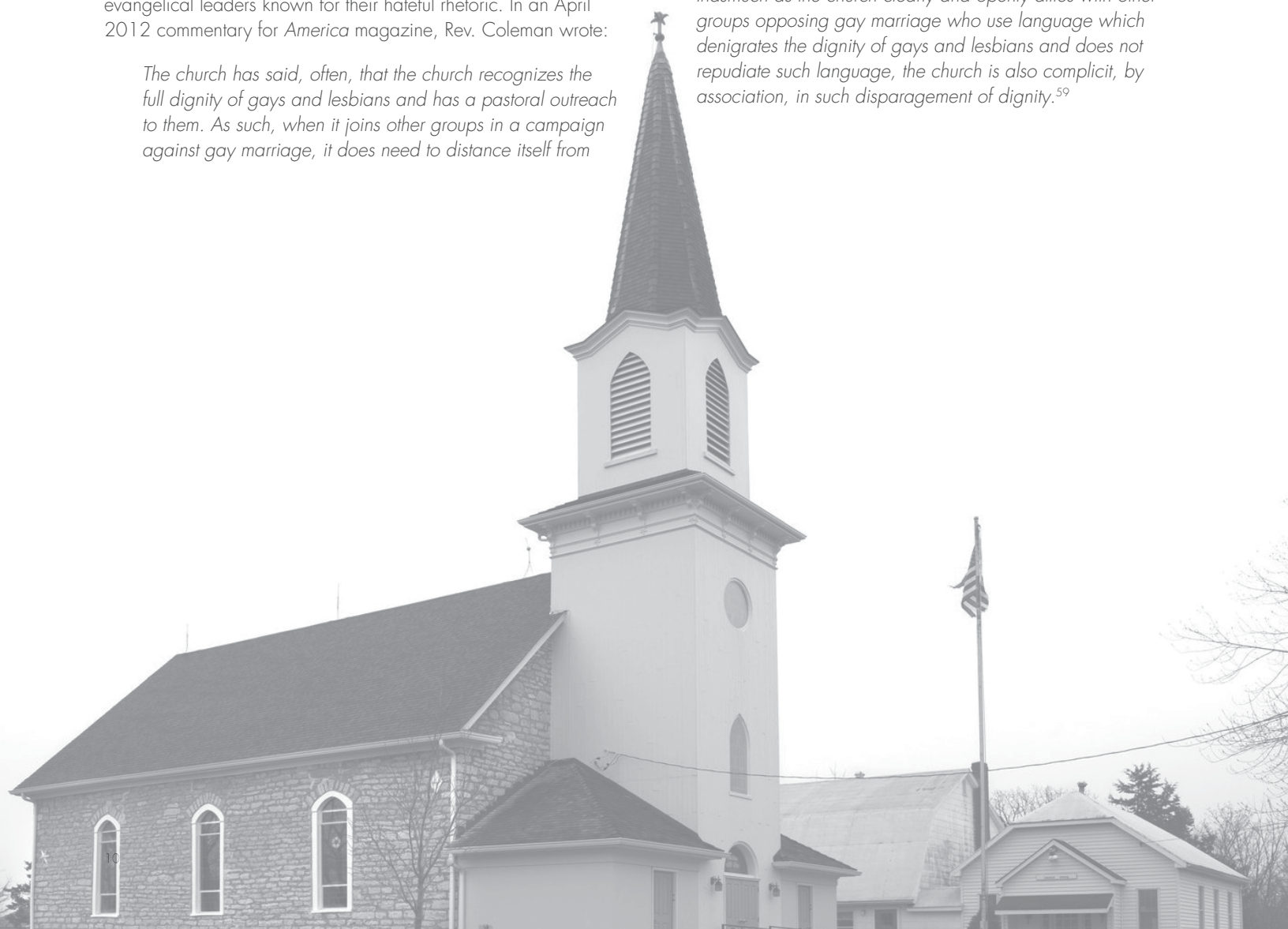
— Rev. John Coleman, S.J., St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco

Coleman also pointed out that some Catholic leaders have aligned themselves with right-wing groups like Focus on the Family and evangelical leaders known for their hateful rhetoric. In an April 2012 commentary for *America* magazine, Rev. Coleman wrote:

The church has said, often, that the church recognizes the full dignity of gays and lesbians and has a pastoral outreach to them. As such, when it joins other groups in a campaign against gay marriage, it does need to distance itself from



*the intemperate rhetoric fulminating from its electoral allies. Inasmuch as the church clearly and openly allies with other groups opposing gay marriage who use language which denigrates the dignity of gays and lesbians and does not repudiate such language, the church is also complicit, by association, in such disparagement of dignity.*⁵⁹



CULTURE WARS VS. THE COMMON GOOD: THE COST OF GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

CASE STUDY:

LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT, MINNESOTA

Mark Shultz grew up a proud Catholic boy on the South Side of Chicago. His faith and family taught him lessons about justice and solidarity with the marginalized that he still carries today as the policy and organizing director of the Land Stewardship Project.⁶⁰ The Minneapolis-based organization, founded in 1982, trains new farmers, challenges large-scale factory farms that have poor records on labor rights, and advocates for more sustainable local agriculture.

"My faith is the reason I'm an organizer," Shultz said.

The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) has received more than a dozen CCHD grants since the late-1980s. Its work is a natural fit given Catholic teaching on food security and responsible stewardship. "Beyond meeting pastoral needs, the Catholic community has a responsibility to raise the ethical dimensions of issues that shape rural life and agricultural policy," the U.S. bishops wrote in a 2003 statement, *Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*.⁶¹ Since 2007, LSP has received \$190,000 in grant money from CCHD. The organization also had an office in the Winona, Minnesota diocese.

This longstanding relationship with the Campaign abruptly ended in the summer of 2012. Just weeks after LSP was awarded a \$48,000 grant from CCHD to organize immigrant farmers at risk of exploitation in livestock factory farms in southeast Minnesota, the group was told by CCHD officials that the money would be pulled unless it resigned its membership in two organizations — the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and TakeAction Minnesota. Those organizations work on a diverse range of issues from racial justice to strengthening the effectiveness of non-profit organizations. They also had stated positions supporting marriage equality for same-sex couples.

In November 2012, TakeAction Minnesota opposed a failed ballot initiative that would have amended the state's constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman — a major focus of the Catholic bishops' advocacy work in the state that year. The Land Stewardship Project has never had a position on same-sex marriage. It did not work on the ballot initiative.





“We’re being penalized not because of anything we did, but because of who we were associated with.”

— Mark Shultz, Policy and Organizing Director,
Land Stewardship Project

After extensive conversations with LSP board members, including a Catholic sister and a steering committee made up of farmers and several faithful Catholics, the organization decided that renouncing its membership in the two groups would hurt its effectiveness as a statewide advocacy group. LSP lost the \$48,000 CCHD grant.⁶²

“We just felt like we could not be bullied,” Shultz said. “We’re actually a stronger organization because of all this. We have coalesced around values of Catholic social teaching like solidarity.”

Why not just cut ties with the organizations and keep the grant?

In a letter to the U.S. bishops’ CCHD office in Washington, the LSP defined TakeAction Minnesota and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits as “valued allies” in its “work towards racial and economic justice and stewardship of farmland.” The letter elaborates:

The mission of TakeAction Minnesota is to pursue social, racial and economic justice. The mission of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits is to strengthen the nonprofit sector and individual nonprofit organizations in Minnesota. These missions are consistent with the mission of CCHD, and the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. In the shorter-term, these organizations may engage in various initiatives, but their members are not bound to support or participate in them, especially those of a secondary nature to the mission

of the organization. LSP has taken no position on nor does it knowingly promote work opposing the proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment defining marriage, through any organization in which we are a member. When asked by others to join a coalition organized for the purpose of defeating the Minnesota amendment defining marriage, LSP declined to sign-on and participate.”⁶³

Peter Martin, Director of the Office of Life for the Diocese of Winona, said in a statement that “it is unfortunate that immigrants, minorities and family farmers will suffer because the leadership at LSP has chosen to align itself with TakeAction Minnesota, an organization which stands in opposition to Catholic moral teaching.”⁶⁴

So what happened between the time when the LSP was informed it would receive a \$48,000 CCHD grant and the ultimatum to part ways with the two groups or lose funding?

The American Life League compiled a dossier about LSP, posted it online, and sent it to officials in the Winona diocese and CCHD officials at the bishops’ conference in Washington.⁶⁵ It included documentation that LSP was a membership organization of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and TakeAction Minnesota. The dossier also highlighted a personal contribution of less than \$300 that the executive director of the LSP and his wife made in their private capacity to an organization in the Midwest that advocates for gay and lesbians.

The report includes pictures of the executive director and his wife with red arrows pointing at their heads.

Shultz believes the American Life League’s “witch hunt” tactics created an atmosphere of fear and paranoia that cast doubt about the LSP’s fidelity to Catholic teaching despite its long history of working with CCHD and focus on land stewardship. Catholics

and other people of faith responded immediately. One Catholic wrote a check for \$25,000, the largest individual donation the organization has ever received. A few Catholic priests who are members of the organization sent in money and thank-you notes. LSP made up the lost grant money and more.

Shultz remains an ardent cheerleader for the bishops' anti-poverty program even as he worries about the Campaign's future. Given the growing ideological attacks on CCHD — and what he calls "complacency" among some Catholic leaders that he believes are not doing enough to bolster the church's social justice commitment — Shultz sounds a call to action.

"Are bishops organizing to support CCHD?" he asked. "All of this great work empowers low-income people, but they need to make sure their important mission is strengthened because they are losing good groups and money is being pulled from organizations that are really putting Catholic social teaching into action."



CASE STUDY:

COMPAÑEROS, COLORADO

In rural southwest towns like Pueblo, Colorado, immigrant families have few places to turn for help. Compañeros is one of those places of refuge — a resource center with a pint-sized budget that stretches every dollar to help its largely Mexican-born clients in three counties. Nicole Mosher, whose mother was an undocumented immigrant, runs the center with only the help of a young intern.

"My mother's experience really opened my eyes to the reality of immigrants' lives in our community," said Mosher, who began tutoring and working with low-income immigrants as a college student in Durango.⁶⁶

When CCHD began funding Compañeros in 2002, the partnership made perfect sense. Catholic teaching views all immigrants, regardless of legal status, as worthy of human dignity and protection. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has been a leading advocate for comprehensive immigration reform for decades. The bishops' *Justice for Immigrants* initiative has sponsored postcard campaigns urging Catholics to write to their representatives in support of immigration reform that "provides a path to citizenship for undocumented persons" and "preserves family unity as a cornerstone of our national immigration system."⁶⁷

As the only resource center for immigrants in the area, Compañeros put its \$25,000 CCHD grant to good use. The center helps immigrants get basic health care, translation assistance and





legal counseling if they face deportation. After nearly a decade of advocacy, *Compañeros* finally won its fight to get the city council to create a community relations committee that is more responsive to the needs of Latino immigrant families. The scrappy non-profit was putting Catholic teaching about defending the dignity of immigrants into practice, and with an annual budget of less than \$60,000 the Catholic church's financial support was essential. This crucial lifeline from CCHD would soon be pulled.

In February 2012, Mosher received notice from the Diocese of Pueblo that its CCHD grant was in jeopardy. *Compañeros* was a member of the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC), which helped *Compañeros* access a statewide network with policy expertise, training capacity and lobbying muscle in Denver.

According to CIRC's mission statement, the organization is made up of "immigrant, faith, labor, youth, community, business and ally organizations founded in 2002 to improve the lives of immigrants and refugees by making Colorado a more welcoming, immigrant-friendly state. CIRC achieves this mission through non-partisan civic engagement, public education, and advocating for workable, fair and humane immigration policies."⁶⁸ The coalition has more than 50 members across the state.

CIRC had recently welcomed One Colorado, a gay-rights organization, into the coalition because advocates recognized a need to help LGBT immigrants who often faced discrimination on multiple fronts. *Compañeros* did not work on LGBT issues or lobby for same-sex marriage. It had enough challenges meeting the basic needs of immigrants and staying afloat financially. But this indirect association with One Colorado was enough to raise alarms in the Pueblo diocese.

“At first I didn’t even take the possibility of losing our grant seriously because it just seemed silly. There was nothing blatant in what we were doing. We were not working on LGBT issues or offending the Catholic Church in any way.”

— Nicole Mosher, Executive Director, *Compañeros*

The message the diocese sent was clear: leave the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition or lose the money.

Almost half of *Compañeros*' budget came from the U.S. bishops' anti-poverty Campaign. The ultimatum presented a stark choice. Mosher called an emergency board meeting. Immigrant rights groups she worked with across the state sent messages of support. *Compañeros* decided not to leave this statewide network that helped them by providing trainings, policy workshops and other resources that made the organization a more effective advocate for immigrants.

A spokesperson for the Diocese of Pueblo declined to answer specific questions about *Compañeros*, but referred to a June 1, 2012 press release that states funding was withdrawn because the immigrant advocacy group "chose to formally stand with a group that publicly advocates for civil unions, a stance contrary to Church teaching."⁶⁹

Mosher felt proud standing up for *Compañeros*. She was also nervous about the center's ability to survive. It didn't take long before the phone started ringing. Donations came in a flurry. A *New York Times* article brought national attention.⁷⁰

"We got calls from Catholics, gay Catholics, non-Catholics and just about everybody," Mosher said. "It was amazing to see the outpouring of support. People were asking how to donate. We didn't even have a web site."

A man from England sent \$1,000. A local Unitarian church set aside their monthly tithing, about \$350, for *Compañeros*. The center raised nearly \$20,000 from individual donations alone. Catholics United, a social justice group, helped raise \$7,000. The Denver-based Gill Foundation, which advocates for LGBT rights, was impressed by *Compañeros*' courage and pledged \$30,000 over two years. Perhaps the most inspiring call, Mosher said, came from a Catholic priest in Arizona long after the initial burst of donations dried up. The priest told Mosher what happened to her organization was an injustice. His parishioners agreed to take up a collection and sent \$700 with a note of support.

The infusion of new funding helped *Compañeros* weather a period of uncertainty after the CCHD grant was revoked, but Mosher still worries about the future without the anchor of the Campaign's funding. She still doesn't regret the decision. "Fighting for social justice can be thankless, but we're doing good work. I believe we're honoring the fundamental teachings of Jesus."

CASE STUDY:

GAMALIEL FOUNDATION, FAITH-BASED ORGANIZING NETWORK

A fourth-generation Catholic born in the Dominican Republic, Ana Garcia-Ashley has been a community organizer for more than two decades and worked on CCHD-funded initiatives as far back as the 1980s. She is now the executive director of the Gamaliel Foundation, one the nation's largest networks for grassroots faith-based community organizing. Perhaps more than any other faith-based justice group, Gamaliel affiliates across the country are targets of the American Life League and the Reform CCHD Now coalition.

"We have experienced more sustained, aggressive attacks from these groups," Garcia-Ashley said.⁷¹

In 2004, Gamaliel affiliates across the country voted to establish the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), a coalition of grassroots, state and national organizations. In March 2010, the coalition's executive committee publicly expressed support for the Uniting American Families Act (UAFSA), a legislative proposal that addressed thousands of bi-national gay and lesbian couples at risk of separation. The coalition announced:

With no clear pathway towards legalization or federal recognition of same-sex couples, these couples live constantly in a state of fear or exile. We believe that keeping families together should be an integral part of comprehensive immigration reform. We believe that we strengthen our communities and our nation when we support the right of all families to stay together, including LGBT families.⁷²

The "Reform CCHD Now" coalition quickly pounced, describing Gamaliel as an "organization promoting homosexuality."⁷³ Gamaliel affiliates in 17 states focus on a diverse set of issues, including living wages, quality health care, immigration reform and affordable housing. Branding Gamaliel as an organization

that exists to promote "homosexuality" is a signature tactic of the coalition. Even after the national organization withdrew from the FIRM coalition in 2010, Gamaliel remains a target. Garcia-Ashley says the American Life League monitors her speaking engagements and has accused Gamaliel of lying to bishops about withdrawing from the FIRM coalition.⁷⁴

“All of this hurts low-income communities of color because it damages our capacity to train leaders and marginalizes authentic voices for justice in the policy debate. I find it embarrassing as a Catholic. These groups have an anti-organizing bias and see our work as an attack on their values. The climate really began to change during the 2008 presidential campaign.”

— Ana Garcia-Ashley, Executive Director, Gamaliel Foundation

Candidate Barack Obama's background as a community organizer became fodder for political attacks during his first run for the presidency. During the 1980s, Obama worked with a local affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation doing congregation-based organizing with Catholic parishes on the South Side of Chicago — organizing funded in part by a grant from the Catholic bishops' anti-poverty Campaign.⁷⁵ This experience was a mark against the candidate in the eyes of some conservatives. Sarah Palin fired up the Republican base when she mocked community organizers during her Republican National Convention speech that year. "I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities," the former mayor of Wasilla, Alaska said in her speech.⁷⁶

In 2012-2013 alone, five Gamaliel affiliates have lost CCHD funds, and more are under scrutiny, including Gamaliel affiliate WISDOM in Wisconsin.⁷⁷



In Wisconsin, Gamaliel affiliates are under constant scrutiny from Christians United for Truth, which warns ominously on its web site that “liberal social community organizations are infiltrating our community and Christian churches.”⁷⁸ The group, which highlights that “Barack Obama was a community organizer for Gamaliel,” criticizes the faith-based organizing network for promoting “amnesty for illegal immigrants,” “wealth redistribution,” and “government run healthcare.” Christians United for Truth promoted a May 19, 2013 lecture in Wisconsin by an American Life League official entitled: “Robbing Peter to Pay Saul: How a Corrupt Social ‘Gospel,’ Including CCHD, Promotes Evil under the Guise of Justice.”⁷⁹

Catholic bishops are not Catholic enough for Christians United for Truth, which on its web site also features an American Life League video asking Catholics to “pray and fast” for bishops who they claim have denigrated Catholic identity by accepting government funding for religious charities.⁸⁰ The group singles out the Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Diocese of La Crosse for scorn because of their relationships with the Wisconsin Council of Churches, which Christians United for Truth finds scandalous because the Council supports “increases in school lunch programs” and “union jobs.” The Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state’s bishops, also comes up for condemnation because it supported legislative efforts to increase day-care spending for children of single parents and opposed a bill that would allow citizens to carry concealed weapons.⁸¹

David Liners, who leads a Gamaliel affiliate in Wisconsin called WISDOM that works with 10 local affiliates in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison and other cities, says groups like Christians United for Truth are on the extreme fringes, but have an outsized impact.⁸²

“Their mission is to stop us, and it creates a lot of difficulty,” Liners said. “They go around giving workshops and get the ear of some bishops. In Green Bay, the bishop has prohibited congregations from being a member of our organization. We’ve lost congregations. These groups flood churches with materials they’ve created about us. Eventually a pastor will just say ‘I can’t take this anymore.’”

Justine Lodl, Director of Communications for the Diocese of Green Bay, said Catholic parishes are prohibited to become formal members of organizations like WISDOM. “Bishop Ricken is concerned that membership could make Catholic parishes subject to a parallel hierarchy with which the Catholic Church could have conflicts,” she said.⁸³ While individual parishioners can have a personal membership in WISDOM, she added, “an undesirable result of dual affiliations could be that a conflict could place our parishioners in a very difficult position of having to choose between their Catholic Church authority and another parallel organization.”

Gamaliel affiliates in Wisconsin have a long history of receiving CCHD grants from the U.S. bishops. Liners says these funds have been critical to empowering the homeless, unemployed, immigrants and other vulnerable communities. “We have organizers today that we would not have without CCHD. We would do less if it wasn’t for them.”

WISDOM is currently focused on a statewide prison reform campaign that involves educating lawmakers about the impact of mass incarceration and the need for better rehabilitation and drug treatment strategies.⁸⁴ The principles of the campaign align with values articulated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a 2000 statement, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*.⁸⁵

But in its national report, the American Life League blasts WISDOM for being an affiliate of Citizen Action of Wisconsin, an organization that has fought for increases in the minimum wage, Medicaid expansion and state budgets that protect the working poor. When a rally in front of the Wisconsin state capitol in the spring of 2012 included a few representatives from Citizen Action of Wisconsin, along with some pro-choice groups, the “Reform CCHD Now” coalition branded WISDOM as an anti-Catholic organization in its report.⁸⁶

“WISDOM does not focus on the issue of abortion,” said Liners. “I’m really tired of being defensive. Just the act of being defensive gives credence to these people. As a Catholic, I find all of this unspeakably painful.”

A REJECTION OF “ALINSKY-STYLE” ORGANIZING

Not all of CCHD defunding involves guilt by association. In some cases, there is also a deeper hostility toward the principles of community organizing despite the church’s long history of shaping and supporting this movement.

CASE STUDY:

NORTH BAY ORGANIZING PROJECT, CALIFORNIA

An hour north of San Francisco, Santa Rosa is a gateway city to California’s famed wine country. Wealthy residents live in close physical proximity to but a cultural world away from the working poor in service-economy jobs and immigrant laborers toiling on farms.

Susan Shaw of the North Bay Organizing Project, a Gamaliel affiliate, is trying to harness the power of low-income residents who are excluded from Sonoma County’s prosperity and privilege. Supported by \$65,000 in CCHD grants from 2010-2012, the North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP) is a multi-racial, multi-faith organizing network that has advocated for immigrant rights, equal representation in city government, neighborhood development and transportation policies that do not exclude low-income residents.

“We’re inspired by Catholic social teaching that the poor should have a seat at the table and a say in public policy decisions,” said Shaw.⁸⁷

Shaw was looking forward to a long and productive relationship with the anti-poverty Campaign. This hope quickly fizzled. In the summer of 2011, Bishop Robert Vasa was appointed to the diocese of Santa Rosa. The funding relationship with CCHD came to a halt. Shaw and her colleagues were stunned. She left feeling even more perplexed after a cordial meeting with the new bishop. Shaw was told the bishop did not believe in “Alinsky-style organizing.”

In the 1930s, Saul Alinsky began organizing in “Back of the Yards,” a working-class and largely Catholic neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side made famous by Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle* — a harrowing depiction of inhumane conditions immigrant workers faced in the yard’s meatpacking plants. Alinsky had the support of the city’s auxiliary Catholic bishop, Bernard J. Sheil,





who helped Alinsky start what would become the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) — a network of community organizers led by the working poor that is still thriving today.⁸⁸ Msgr. John Egan of Chicago, who became a towering figure in Catholic social history and marched with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., also worked with Alinsky in the 1960s and helped develop a cadre of priests trained in community organizing.⁸⁹ Catholic priests and lay leaders have played a prominent role in IAF since its founding in 1940. Today it is one of the nation's largest networks of faith and community-based organizations.

When Bishop Vasa invoked Alinsky in their conversation about the North Bay Organizing Project, Shaw told the bishop that Catholic churches with large Latino populations were already active in her organization's advocacy to stop anti-immigrant crackdowns in the city. The diocese, she urged, could play a powerful role as a moral catalyst on a range of justice issues supported by the North Bay Organizing Project. "He was very warm and cordial, but I felt discouraged and sad to see him not doing more to stand up for helping poor people build power," Shaw said. "He said that the best thing the poor could do for their community was to pray."

The North Bay Organizing Project is now working to fill a major hole left by the loss of CCHD funding. "We're scrambling for money now," Shaw acknowledged.

"I choose not to discuss this," Bishop Vasa wrote in an e-mail to the author of this report seeking comment about why the North Bay Organizing Project was not renewed for CCHD funding, saying only that it is "reviewed annually."

Rev. Gene Nelson, a United Church of Christ pastor in Santa Rosa, has noticed a growing reluctance on the part of Catholic leaders in the area to engage in social justice work over the last few decades. Twenty-five years ago, Nelson was the founding president of the now defunct Sonoma Napa Action Project, which had the support of a succession of Catholic bishops and benefited from a \$50,000 grant from the U.S. bishops' anti-poverty Campaign.⁹⁰

“There has been a huge change in the Catholic community. I remember twenty years ago Protestants and Catholics working together even when we did not agree on everything. The Catholic priests and Latino Catholic congregations were especially essential. There is a backing away from what I experienced as traditional Catholic teaching and involvement with justice issues. It's kind of astounding to see a shift from an attitude that says 'what can we do to help' to 'we have to toe an ideological line.'”

— Rev. Gene Nelson, United Church of Christ pastor, Santa Rosa, Calif.

CASE STUDY:

GREATER CLEVELAND CONGREGATIONS, OHIO

Thousands of miles across the country in Cleveland, Ohio, similar trends are at work. After decades of Catholic leadership on labor rights, affordable housing and urban economic development, many advocating for low-income communities are now accustomed to doing so without a Catholic presence.

During the 2011 launch of Greater Cleveland Congregations — attended by more than 2,000 interfaith leaders representing 40 congregations across the city — Bishop Richard Lennon prohibited Catholic pastors and parish administrators from participating. The bishop gave no public reason for his fiat at the time. Dorothy Valerian, who sat on the diocese's CCHD Advisory Board, said that the interfaith organization had earlier applied for a CCHD grant from the diocese. Her fellow advisory board members gave the organization the highest possible rating and recommended funding.⁹¹ The bishop rejected the application.

Valerian, who has been involved with reviewing CCHD proposals in the Cleveland diocese since 1997, resigned in March 2013. The diocese's rigid protocol for reviewing CCHD grant applications has "shifted in ways that value conformity over dialogue, aim to limit rather than expand our belief in mutuality with our sisters and brothers, make lists that exclude rather than act to promote understanding and the common good," she wrote in her resignation letter.⁹² Just days later, another member of the CCHD advisory committee resigned in protest for similar reasons.

In a nod to the 1950s McCarthy era when "blacklists" were emblematic of a culture of fear, the protocol in the Cleveland diocese requires a list of all organizations "found to espouse, support, finance or otherwise promote in any way any position or program that is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church, whether in practice or in philosophy." This is true, according to a copy of the protocol, "whether or not such organizations is or has been an applicant for any CCHD grant." The guidelines also require an "internet search" and "an investigation" of all lead staffers of organizations applying for funds.⁹³

“The review process marginalizes the principles of solidarity that are at the heart of our teaching and really inhibits any opportunity for dialogue. Our mantra always was we do this work not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic. I don’t know where that mantra went.”

— Dorothy Valerian, Former CCHD Advisory Board member, Cleveland diocese

Robert Tayek, Director of Media and Public Relations in the Diocese of Cleveland, said that after meeting with the leadership of Greater Cleveland Congregations Bishop Lennon "was not satisfied with the approach, partly based on some of the historical background of persons involved, along with taking into account recommendations from diocesan staff." Mr. Tayek declined to specify what was problematic about the "historical backgrounds of persons involved." He added: "There is no effort to limit dialogue. However, a high priority is given to adherence to Catholic Church teachings in granting approval to requests."⁹⁴

Greater Cleveland Congregations, according to its mission, "unites people across lines of race, class, religion, and geography to promote public, private and civic sector actions which strengthen and improve the quality of life of our neighborhoods."⁹⁵ The coalition's agenda of advocating for living wages, quality health care and empowering low-income communities is consistent with Catholic teaching.

Not long ago, Catholic leaders in the city would have been front and center in this kind of effort. Bishop Anthony Pilla launched a "Church in the City" initiative in 1993 that put the diocese at the forefront of interfaith efforts to address issues like urban poverty, responsible economic development and affordable housing. "We will give special attention to experiences that bring people together, bridge the gaps that separate us and transcend the racial and economic tensions that too often divide us," Bishop Pilla said in a 1996 speech at the City Club of Cleveland. "I welcome opportunities for interfaith dialogues and partnerships."⁹⁶

Tom Allio, a retired Social Action Director for the Diocese of Cleveland, said that initiative brought together a robust coalition and was a model for effective collaborations.⁹⁷

"The diocese worked with the public sector, interfaith leaders, non-profit agencies, environmentalists and corporate leaders to advance a common vision for the region," said Allio, who urged Bishop Lennon to rethink his opposition to Greater Cleveland Congregations in a June 2011 *Cleveland Plain Dealer* op-ed.⁹⁸

"There are clearly differences in the faith community, theological as well as political, but when we act together we're much stronger than when we act alone. The Catholic Church's efforts to promote the common good and human life become extremely limited if the church isolates herself," he said.

CASE STUDY:

EMPOWERING AND STRENGTHENING OHIO'S PEOPLE (ESOP), OHIO

Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP) is an organization that helps low-income families in Cleveland and throughout the state fight predatory lending and home foreclosures. Certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, ESOP has nine offices across Ohio and is regarded as a model agency by national advocates. But after 15 years of support from Catholic bishops in Cleveland and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, ESOP had its CCHD funding cut off in June 2011.

Cleveland Right to Life, an organization that urges parishioners to boycott the CCHD annual national collection in churches, has been aggressive in challenging those it deems insufficiently anti-abortion and has targeted ESOP for several years.⁹⁹ In 2005, the group flagged ESOP because like many organizations across the country ESOP participated in a national workplace-based giving campaign called Community Shares that lets employees make local charitable contributions to a diverse range of organizations. A few of the many available organizations on Community Shares donations list were "pro-choice" organizations. Mark Seifert, ESOP's executive director, opposes abortion, as do his board members, but he says that is not his organization's mission.

"We're trying to keep people in their homes," he said.¹⁰⁰

Tom Allio, the diocesan Social Action Director who retired in 2010, was a strong supporter of ESOP's work. He acted as a buffer against Cleveland Right to Life and helped protect CCHD funding. After Bishop Pilla and Allio retired, new leadership in the diocese was not as supportive, according to Seifert. Just a few days before CCHD grants were announced at a luncheon, national Campaign staff in Washington informed ESOP that Bishop Lennon had pulled the plug on funding.

The bishop, Seifert was told, did not support a direct action protest the organization had spearheaded outside the home of a regional vice president at Countrywide Financial Corp., the nation's largest mortgage lender at the time and a contributor to the nation's economic meltdown in 2008. An investigative report from the Center for Responsible Lending in 2008 found that Countrywide targeted borrowers for "unfair and unsafe" loans while emphasizing "short term gains and increasing top executive's compensation."¹⁰¹

There is a certain irony that ESOP's long relationship with the bishops' anti-poverty Campaign ended, in part, because of confrontational tactics on behalf of low-income citizens exploited by predatory mortgage lenders. Cleveland Right to Life is no stranger to provocation and personal confrontation. In 2008, the group launched a smear campaign — what it called a "special diocesan investigation" — to fire Allio.¹⁰² Cleveland Right to Life



maligned Allio for being listed on a web site as an advisor to a Catholic social justice organization led by a former staffer of the U.S. bishops' anti-poverty Campaign.

Allio says the character assassination he faced is simply part of a broader assault on the church's justice work. But, he noted, too much at stake to concede ground.

“Many of these critics are bomb throwers who believe that by destroying the credibility of those working for social justice they will somehow enhance the pro-life agenda. Nothing could be further from the truth. They want to make social justice and faith-based organizing dirty words... CCHD is a target of radical right groups because it is effective, engages people at the grassroots and empowers low-income individuals. Its mission is needed more than ever.”

— Tom Allio, retired Social Action Director,
Diocese of Cleveland

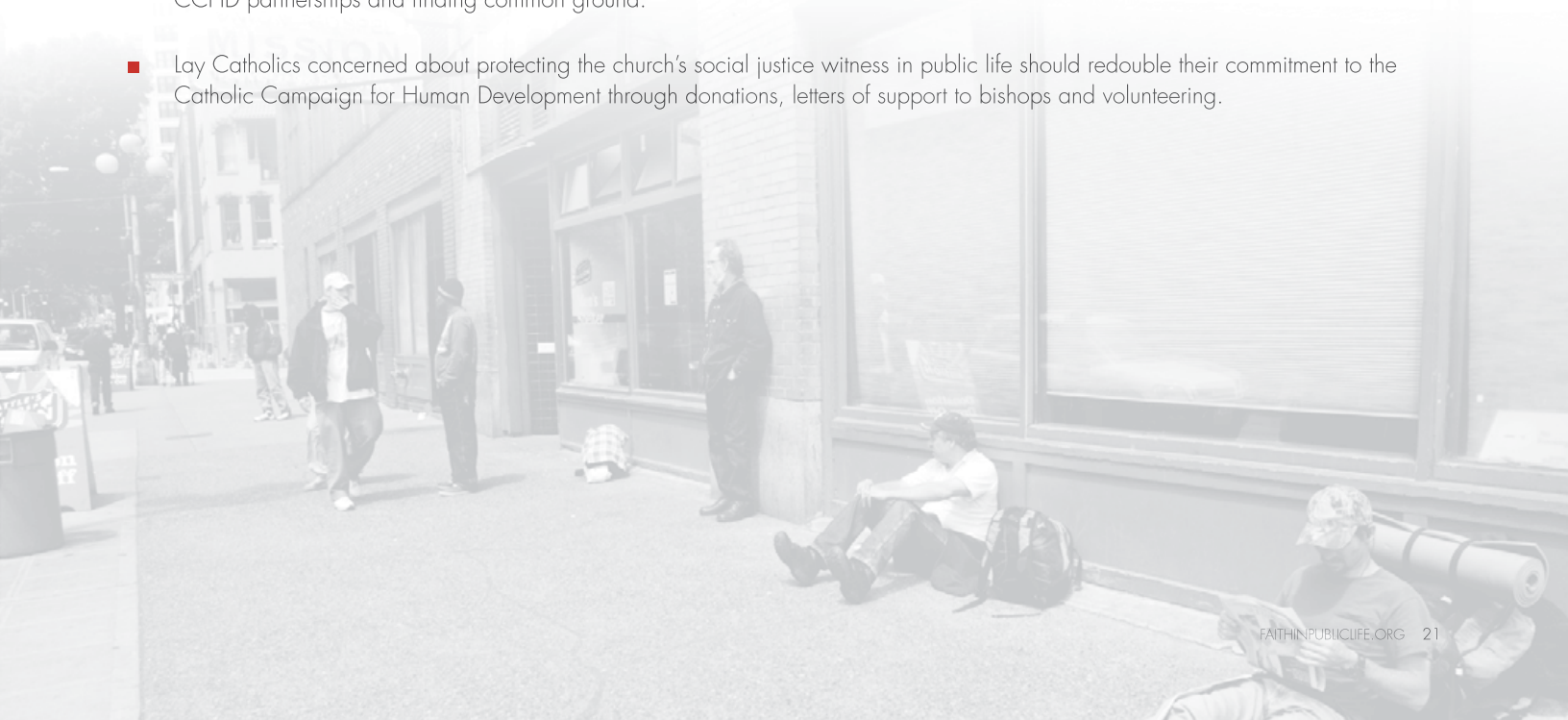
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Empowering low-income citizens to advocate for living wages, quality health care, immigrant rights and responsible land stewardship is central to fulfilling a Catholic vision for the common good. This mission is threatened when groups like the American Life League and the Reform CCHD Now coalition use McCarthy-era tactics to create a culture of fear around community organizing.

While ideological attacks against the bishops' anti-poverty Campaign are not new, a more aggressive and effective network of conservative religious activists has emerged in recent years. These groups, which have targeted individual bishops and diocesan officials, are pushing some church leaders away from engaging in social justice coalitions that have an established record of success.

The individuals and organizations endorsing this report support several recommendations to combat growing threats to critical anti-poverty work funded by the Catholic Church:

- Catholic leaders should resist efforts from the American Life League and other pressure groups to isolate Catholic-funded organizations from effective coalitions that are improving the lives of low-income citizens.
- More prudent theological and practical assessments are needed before CCHD grants are pulled from successful organizations simply because of an organization's association with other groups or coalitions.
- Diocesan officials and CCHD staff at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops should convene public dialogue sessions with a diverse group of anti-poverty experts, social justice advocates, theologians and community organizers with the goal of strengthening CCHD partnerships and finding common ground.
- Lay Catholics concerned about protecting the church's social justice witness in public life should redouble their commitment to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development through donations, letters of support to bishops and volunteering.



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