

Black Faith-Based Coalitions in Boston: Civic Advantages and Challenges

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This chapter examines the emergence of two major black coalitions of faith-based organizations in the city of Boston: the Black Ministerial Alliance and the Ten Point Coalition. These two organizations represent a new civic tool used by activist ministers and congregations to express the preferences of the black religious sector in the city of Boston. The networks are a mechanism for facilitating the participatory role of faith-based organizations in initiatives such as job training, public safety, and youth development and for supporting black political leadership in the city. The information for the study is based on interviews and meetings with a small group of ministers and community activists between 1999 and 2000.

This analysis begins with an explanation regarding the significance of assessing the work of faith-based coalitions in Boston politics. It is important to remember that the black church has a long history of civic and political involvement in the city. What is novel about the Black Ministerial Alliance and the Ten Point Coalition is *not* that they are involved in civic life, but rather that these two coalitions represent a different mechanism for civic participation than activist black churches and clergy have used in the past. A brief overview of both coalitions is provided followed by a description of select political and community activities pursued by these groups. Following this overview the chapter examines two political controversies that found the Ten Point Coalition and the Black Ministerial Alliance on opposing sides. The chapter concludes by describing advantages that these coalitions have in civic and political activities, as well as the challenges that the coalitions face in terms of Boston politics.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FAITH-BASED COALITIONS

There are only a few studies examining coalitions among black churches. A groundbreaking one is Robert A. Clemetson and Roger Coates's *Restoring Broken Places and Rebuilding Communities: A Casebook on African-American Church Involvement in Community Economic Development*.¹ As the authors argue, faith-based networks are emerging as prominent civic actors and distributors of government services. As noted by one observer, "Network structures are being used in the area of community development to empower communities and to try to solve problems previously reserved for government intervention. . . . They are vehicles for tapping into dominant community resources and creating synergy and trust among otherwise independent actors. They encourage building community involvement and innovative solutions to complex problems."²

A majority of black religious institutions in Boston are located in the predominantly black neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. Other than small businesses, churches represent the most numerous kinds of institutions in Boston's black communities. Churches outnumber community-based agencies, community development corporations, and human service agencies. These religious institutions represent both Christian and Islamic faiths as well as places of worship that provide worship services in various languages, reflecting African, Caribbean, and Latino cultures. While the ministers of these churches tend to be male, there are a significant number of churches headed by women pastors, making Boston's rate of women religious leaders higher than national figures.³ The two coalitions discussed here cover a wide range of the religious institutions as members in Boston's black neighborhoods, reflecting diversity in terms of denomination, leadership, and the size of congregations.

There are several reasons that justify the selection of these kinds of coalitions for understanding the dynamics of activist black congregations and clergy in Boston. First, as is the case nationally, the black church in this city is increasingly being turned to as an actor in the provision of social and human services in low-income communities. This is partially due to the way the federal government is becoming involved with the states and social welfare provision. Devolution, a term summarizing this development regarding federal and state relations, is a call for less government interference or influence at the national level in matters related to social welfare. But along with devolution comes reduction in fiscal commitments and resources in many areas that are of major interest to local communities. As devolution occurs, faith-based organizations that have long been involved in social welfare issues become more salient as arenas for the delivery of services that are traditionally handled by government welfare agencies and the non-profit sector. There are increasing reports documenting the recruitment and

utilization of black religious institutions and their leadership for participation in a range of community and economic development activities in urban neighborhoods.⁴

A second reason for pursuing this study is the fact that churches and religious institutions do have organizational characteristics that can be translated into civic resources. Black churches enjoy social and community legitimacy and have a tradition of community involvement. These institutions are highly organized, have a committed and spiritually bonded membership, and have the potential and capacity to raise funds independent of government or businesses. They can mobilize volunteers effectively. As Fredrick C. Harris notes, black churches can disseminate information quickly and with efficiency for purposes of political mobilization.⁵ Another valuable resource is activist ministers who represent an educated group in the black community. Many ministers have acquired organizing skills that can be applied towards the mobilization of both congregants and community residents on behalf of civic and political affairs. This is a key resource in encouraging people to work on behalf of issues and political candidates who are perceived as important to their community's well-being. Related to leadership resources is the capacity of faith-based organizations to provide space and arenas for public and civic discourse regarding issues facing the community.

Black religious institutions can also communicate effectively with their congregations on a range of issues. Consequently, congregations can be mobilized rapidly for various causes when and if the need arises. Harris also notes that black churches can facilitate the learning of organizing skills among congregants who learn these skills in church work. These organizing skills are easily transferable to the civic arena. And, adds Harris, this sector of civic life represents potential supporters and voters who can be solicited on behalf of electoral candidates or political issues.⁶ These kinds of church-based resources have allowed black ministers to be key participants in the city's civic and political affairs. A question to be asked for this analysis is, how are church-based political resources utilized by the two coalitions?

A focus on advocacy networks nurtured by black churches is a commentary, in part, on the state of the institutional infrastructure in Boston's black communities. In a research report issued by the Trotter Institute on the state of black community affairs in 1985, educator Hubie Jones wrote,

The status of institutions in Boston's Black community cannot be understood or assessed outside the context of this community's relationship to the larger white community. This fact is illustrated by the elements that shape the existing social dynamic: numerical minority status, limited political clout, embryonic black business development, outward drainage of financial resources, the poverty of most of its residents, and blocked channels to opportunities and resources in the external community.⁷

Except for reference to numerical minority status, this assessment remains applicable today. So a key question is, can black religious-based networks make a difference in the city of Boston?

CONTINUING CIVIC AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The civic involvement of black churches is not new in Boston.⁸ Unfortunately, a few articles published about this topic suggest that black churches had little or insignificant involvement in community and political affairs before the late 1990s.⁹ A review of Boston's civic life in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s would show an active involvement of black churches that included significant political breakthroughs, the provision of social and human services, the establishment of independent black schools, and collaborative efforts with other sectors in Boston's civic life. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s black faith-based organizations in the city worked extensively in the areas of youth services, public safety, housing, education, and economic development. As Jones described in his essay, "Black churches provide social services, employment assistance and educational programs. Today, the only educational alternatives to the public schools in the black community are church-operated: St. Joseph's School, Berea Academy (Seventh Day Adventist), Owens-Roberts Educational Center (People's Baptist Church), and Clara Muhammad School (American Muslim Mission)."¹⁰ Jones comments that while some efforts have a mixed history of success and failure, "collaborative religious services have been inspirational, vibrant events, reflecting the potential power of collective action."¹¹ This author gives several examples of such collaborative activities: the establishment of an international famine relief effort under the "African American Churches for African Support" in 1985; the Baptist Minister's Conference of Greater Boston, an organization that met to discuss religious and social concerns; and the establishment of the Black Ecumenical Commission in the later 1960s, whose mission was "to work with Black churches to assist them in responding to the problems of poverty and disenfranchisement experienced by Blacks and other minorities in Massachusetts."¹² There are numerous examples of this earlier work throughout the 1970s and 1980s.¹³

Black ministers and churches have also entered the political thicket of Boston. Issues that have motivated involvement on the part of black ministers include education, youth, and public safety. Activist ministers have sought electoral office and have been active in mayoral races, as well as contests for the Boston City Council and School Committee. Black ministers played a key role, for instance, in the debate during the early and mid-1990s about whether or not the Boston School Committee should be appointed or elected. The Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, a precursor to the Black Ministe-

rial Alliance of Greater Boston, endorsed and worked on behalf of an appointed school committee in cooperation with Mayor Raymond Flynn's administration.¹⁴ Black ministers have been involved in political and policy debates in the area of economic development. They have also served in many government and policy-making positions in the city. For example, Reverend Joseph E. Washington of the Wesley United Methodist Church in Dorchester served as senior advisor on equal rights under the mayoral administration of Ray Flynn. In the mid- and late 1980s, Minister Don Muhammad of the Nation of Islam developed a relationship with the mayor and then police deputy superintendent, William Celester. This relationship was widely perceived as helpful in responding to high crime rates in the Grove Hall section of Roxbury.¹⁵ Reverend Ray Hammond of the Bethel A.M.E. Church was appointed to head the Boston Education Reform Committee to lobby for retention of the appointed school committee.¹⁶

Black ministers have created ad-hoc alliances for purposes of endorsing or running candidates for office and for supporting ballot initiatives. They have also planned cooperative political strategies and actions on various civic matters. In 1983 more than thirty black ministers collectively endorsed Mel King for mayor and helped to propel him into the final runoff election. This was the first and only instance in Boston's history in which a black person obtained enough votes to earn a spot in the runoff election for mayor.¹⁷ In 1991 Reverend Ellis Hagler of the First Church of Roxbury ran for the office of mayor and was able to garner several thousand votes, albeit in a losing effort. Activist black ministers were instrumental in assisting the administration of Mayor Flynn to change the Boston School Committee from an elected to an appointed body in 1992. This was a racially and politically divisive issue in the city, especially in the black community. While an overwhelming number of black voters rejected the call for an appointed school committee, a group of black ministers supporting Mayor Flynn on this issue were key in the success of the campaign.

There are other examples of individual activists influencing the public sphere in Boston. Reverend Michael E. Haynes of the Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury, with the active support of his congregation, has a long list of community accomplishments, including his legendary work with youth in Roxbury.¹⁸ Reverend Haynes was elected as a state representative in the Massachusetts legislature for three terms, between 1965 and 1970. He was appointed to the State Parole Board and the Board of Pardons for sixteen years, serving under three governors. He also was appointed to Boston's Fair Housing Commission under Mayor Flynn in 1989.¹⁹

Another activist minister who enjoys a strong reputation in Boston is Minister Don Muhammad, who is the spiritual leader of the Nation of Islam's mosque in Roxbury. Affectionately known as "Minister Don" by many in the black community, this activist minister has focused his civic work on minority

youth. He is recognized for his participation in education and youth issues in Boston as well as for his interest in the economic development of the Roxbury neighborhood. One example of his recognition as a civic leader in Boston is the awarding of the city's Paul Revere Bowl given for outstanding public service on the part of an individual citizen. The work of Mosque #11 and "Minister Don" in the area of economic development was also touted in a study published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.²⁰

In summary, and as discussed in other chapters of this volume, the involvement of black ministers and religious organizations in civic life is characterized by participation in an array of political activities.²¹ Activist black clergy have utilized a range of roles to influence decisions related to community and economic development, including (1) advising politicians, (2) directing involvement in human and social services, (3) supporting and participating in political campaigns, and (4) participating in coalition-based advocacy strategies. There are many resources that black ministers can utilize in their political roles. These include community-based legitimacy that facilitates involvement in political and civic affairs.

TWO FAITH-BASED STRATEGIC COALITIONS: TEN POINT COALITION AND THE BLACK MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE OF GREATER BOSTON

The faith-based coalitions discussed in this chapter are not the only ones based in Boston and the Greater Boston region. The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization is a relatively large organization affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation. It is composed of approximately eighty-five congregations and community organizations that concentrate on housing issues. The organization has been effective in organizing many supporters across racial and ethnic lines in an effort to lobby or campaign on behalf of affordable housing. Other organizations that are formed through coalitions of religious institutions include the City Mission Society, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, and Mattapan-Dorchester Churches in Action.

These faith-based coalitions suggest a different institutional framework for civic involvement on the part of the religious community than past church-based activism. Although different in terms of organizational structure and leadership, the Black Ministerial Alliance and Ten Point Coalition have overlapping memberships. The evolution of the networks reflects the changing role of government and attitudes about the involvement of faith-based organizations in public life as well as a different posture on the part of foundations interested in working in low-income and economically distressed communities. The organizational missions of the Black Ministerial Alliance and the Ten Point Coalition include several components: (a) a concern for

organizing the faith community on behalf of civic issues deemed important for the social and economic well-being of marginal neighborhoods; (b) an understanding that there are important resources within the faith community that could be transferred to the civic arena; (c) a sense of obligation that faith-based organizations must help to improve living conditions as part of a spiritual mission; and (d) a history and strong tradition of civic participation at various levels.

The leadership of the two coalitions believes that the faith-based sector in Boston's black communities has key—and perhaps unique—resources that can be identified and applied strategically to improve living conditions for residents. A review of the work and official statements of each organization shows that the ministers involved do not see a contradiction between spiritual salvation and involvement in civic and political affairs of the state. There is a general sense, furthermore, that differences in faith and denominations should not serve to obstruct the building of coalitions and collaborative strategies with other sectors concerned about civic issues. Each network is led by religious leaders who believe that there is a spiritual mandate for civic participation and moral obligation to support and advocate on behalf of the community's social and economic well-being. What follows is a description of the aims of the two coalitions.

The Ten Point Coalition

The Ten Point Coalition is a group of Christian clergy and lay leaders working to mobilize the Christian community around issues affecting black and Latino youth, especially those at risk for violence and drug abuse. The coalition was established following a gang shooting of a victim at a black church in the neighborhood of Mattapan in May 1992.²² This incident helped to mobilize many religious leaders in the black community. Clergy collectively developed a pastoral letter and pledged a street-level crusade to help youth, especially those involved with gangs and drugs. As explained by one of the leading spokespersons of the pastoral letter, a major purpose of the call to action is to help move faith-based organizations to include “the salvation of our communities” as they work toward the “salvation of souls.”²³

According to the coalition's document, “A Ten Point Coalition Plan for a National Church Mobilization to Combat Black on Black Violence,” this organization is based on membership that seeks to “generate serious discussion regarding the specific ways in which the Christian community can bring the peace of God to the violent world of our youth. We therefore call upon churches, church agencies, and the academic theological community throughout the nation to consider, discuss, debate and implement, singly or in collaboration, any one or more of the ten points.” According to Reverend Ray Hammond, the chairman of the coalition and one of its founders, this organization

“is an ecumenical group of Christian clergy and lay leaders working to mobilize the greater Boston community, and especially the Christian local church community, around issues affecting Black and Latino youth—especially those at-risk for violence, drug abuse, and other destructive behaviors.”

The Reverend Hammond expresses the guiding philosophy of the coalition when he states:

Somehow we must get beyond the blame game and the sterile either/or debate that makes this crisis either as some conservatives would have it the simple result of a decline in personal and family values or as some liberals would have it the simple result of larger social and political forces. We must acknowledge that there are forces at work both at the personal, family and community level, and at the political, policy and macroeconomic level; that both personal decision and public policies play a role in making our communities safer and stronger. We must move to an emphasis on what I like to call the 3 R's of community and spiritual revitalization: renewal, responsibility, and reconnection—renewal of our faith in the fact that we can make a difference in every aspect of the lives of our youth, their families, and their communities; a willingness to take full responsibility for our respective roles in meeting the needs of our youth, and a commitment to reconnecting and working in collaboration with other individuals and institutions.²⁴

The coalition engages in many community activities, but the primary mission of this organization is to mobilize churches to reach out to at-risk youth.

This coalition was incorporated as a formal nonprofit organization in the spring of 1996. There are fifteen board members, eight of whom are clergy. A sample of the activities sponsored by the group includes a training workshop series called “Resurrecting Our Future.” The series provides information on domestic violence, community organizing, training for night street patrols as well as activities such as computer and summer camps for youth, information seminars on homeownership, and a microenterprise development project that provides support and information about capital acquisition for emerging entrepreneurs. The coalition receives funding from foundations, an annual fundraising dinner, and local, state, and federal grants, which account for 10 to 15 percent of the organization’s budget. The coalition also receives direct or in-kind support from local churches and has developed many inter-organizational relationships with public agencies and community organizations. These relationships involve work with the police department, schools, the probation department, youth-oriented organizations, community health agencies, and community development organizations. The group is attempting to build relationships with other ethnic-based organizations as well. The leadership recognizes that in addition to the African American and European American communities, there are other communities with at-risk youth.

The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston

The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston is an association of clergy serving black churches and other minority congregations and individuals representing denominational agencies and ministries. The alliance is the older of the two networks of faith-based coalitions. It is the largest as well, representing a broad base of member churches and religious associations. This coalition has evolved over four decades. Prior to becoming known as the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, the organization was called the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, and before that, it was called the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. By the year 2000 approximately fifty member pastors or their representatives were attending monthly breakfast meetings. Reverend Wesley Roberts, the president of the Black Ministerial Alliance and pastor of People's Baptist Church, posits that the alliance is one of the strongest black organizations in Boston as evident in its strong networks and its capacity to organize and mobilize many church members. The mission of this association of faith-based organizations is to provide advocacy for the black community in the areas of political affairs, human services, education, housing, economic development, youth services, and spiritual life. Most of the member churches are located in the predominantly black communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. The alliance is composed of several advocacy committees reflecting a wide range of leaders in the black church sector.

Shortly after accepting the presidency of this organization in 1994, Reverend Roberts proposed organizational changes that made the coalition more inclusive and allowed it to better coordinate its activities among member congregations and associations. He changed the name of the organization, which was originally called the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance. This name was chosen because the Nation of Islam was a founding member of the organization and members wanted to ensure that the name allowed for the inclusion of the Nation of Islam. Reverend Roberts proposed the name, Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, which was accepted by the membership and reflected the growing influence of the coalition outside of the predominately black communities of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan. Reverend Roberts also changed the organizational structure so that activities of the alliance are decentralized. The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston has a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and chairpersons for nine advocacy committees. This group of people constitutes the executive committee, which meets on a monthly basis. Committees chaired by individuals are directly responsible for the committee activities. The nine committees, each chaired by a member pastor, are education, spiritual life, criminal justice, housing, economic affairs, human services, political affairs, youth, and inter-church relations. Today, the alliance is a dues-paying member organization. Membership

in the alliance is not limited to churches, nor is it limited to African Americans exclusively.

The alliance has developed extensive participation and leadership in many civic issues in Boston. For example, semi-annual meetings with the Boston Police Commissioner and focusing on the reduction of juvenile crime in the black community have been sponsored under the auspices of the Black Ministerial Alliance. The alliance has sponsored workshops on domestic violence awareness for black clergy and has organized workshops and information sessions on the problem of asthma and heart disease. In the area of economic development, representatives from the coalition served as planning committee members for a regional conference on African American clergy and economic development, which was convened by the Federal Reserve Bank. Recognizing the potential influence and work of this organization, the mayor of Boston appointed the president of the alliance to the advisory board of the Boston Empowerment Zone in order that the black religious community would have a voice in policy issues related to the zone and the communities that would be impacted by targeted development.

In 1998, the alliance's board, led by Reverend Leroy Attles of St. Paul's Church in Cambridge, the late Reverend Ozzie Edwards of Elliot Street Church, Reverend Jossie E. Owens of the Second Church of Dorchester, and the Reverend Charlotte Pridgen-Randolph of Wesley United Methodist Church, decided to undertake a major programmatic initiative in education. While the organization continues advocacy work with other issues, its leadership believes that the quality of public education is one of the most critical issues facing the city of Boston. With funding from the Hyams Foundation and the United Way, the alliance developed a proposal to establish the "Victory Generation" after-school program. A major goal of this program is to develop forty licensed after-school programs in member churches as a strategy to increase the academic performance of two thousand middle and high school students throughout the city. The alliance has also received significant funding from foundations to support the planning and implementation of an educational action campaign to empower parents and community residents.

In addition to developing church-based programs, the alliance encourages its members to express their opinions at the ballot box and has not hesitated to adopt public positions on civic issues. As a result, and due to its broad base and extensive activities, the alliance has emerged as an important political player in the black community. In 1995 this organization distributed a controversial memo critical of Mayor Thomas Menino. The memo included complaints about the privatization of elderly housing developments, the mayor's affirmative action stand, and the mayor's seeming lack of commitment to economic development in black neighborhoods during that period. The memo stirred intense public discussions about the mayor's role in re-

sponding to the needs of the black community. The alliance also organized and provided testimony against the restoration of the death penalty at the Massachusetts state legislature hearings. It has cosponsored, with organizations such as the NAACP, numerous voter registration drives and strategies to encourage voter participation in elections. And it has lobbied the Boston Housing Authority regarding racial incidents in the city's public housing developments.

POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES

There has been some political conflict between the two coalitions as well as tensions within each of the organizations. A few years ago, divisive statements by some ministers about black elected officials led to the issuance of a public letter on the part of the Ten Point Coalition clarifying who actually speaks on behalf of the organization. In a letter to the *Boston Globe* asserting existing divisions and conflict among black clergy, the leadership of the Ten Point Coalition endorsed a call for unity.²⁵ Signed by Reverends Jeffrey L. Brown, Ray Hammond, and Samuel C. Wood, the letter noted, "While individual members have differed publicly with other members, the organization has never made any critical statements. Indeed, we are thankful for the support of black elected officials who have worked with us to address common concerns." Further, it reminded readers, "The executive committee consists of Reverends Ray Hammond, Jeffrey Brown, Samuel Wood, and Eugene Rivers. While Reverend Rivers is a respected and committed member, he is not the spokesperson for or the leader of the coalition."²⁶ There is concern about the negative fallout from the conflict and some ministers have started to develop better relationships and alliances as a result of the tensions.

One political controversy in Boston in 1999 involved the public defense by a few black ministers regarding a local magazine that used a pejorative term about a black individual on the front cover feature article. In its April 1998 issue the *Boston Magazine* published a critical story focusing on Professor Henry Louis Gates of Harvard University titled, "Head Negro in Charge."²⁷ Quite a few black leaders, including religious leaders, were offended at the journal's use of this term, arguing that it reflected poor judgment, racial arrogance, and disrespect and that it perpetuated racist stereotypes in Boston. The magazine's editors argued that it had license to use this term based on its increasing use in popular culture, as well as the fact that two black ministers, Reverend Eugene Rivers of the Azusa Community Church and Reverend Jeffrey Brown of Union Baptist Church in Cambridge did not object to the term being used in this manner.

Upon hearing that a group of black leaders planned to visit the editor and protest the use of the phrase, the editors contacted Reverends Rivers and

Brown who intercepted the protesters in order to defend the *Boston Magazine* at the same press conference. Reverend Brown asserted in defense of the magazine, "I've been called a head Negro in charge by people in the Black community. . . . It's not a derogatory term, not as it's used now."²⁸ Many people were also upset at the tone of what was perceived as personal attacks on highly respected leaders who were among the protestors, including Reverend Charles Stith of Union United Methodist Church; Dr. Joan Wallace-Benjamin, the president of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; and Mr. Lenny Alkins, president of the NAACP Boston Branch. As a result of this episode the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts expelled Reverend Rivers from its board.²⁹

Another divisive episode was the response to the indictment of State Senator Dianne Wilkerson, the only black woman state senator in the history of Massachusetts. This controversy occurred just a few months after the "Head Negro in Charge" incident and also involved the public pronouncements of Reverends Rivers, Brown, and Hammond regarding the indictment of Senator Wilkerson. Although making what some considered some tactical mistakes early in her legislative career (such as challenging the leadership of Senate President William Bulger), Senator Wilkerson built a reputation as a strong advocate of women and family rights. Her impressive legislative record included strong advocacy for economic development policies beneficial to poor and working-class neighborhoods. Moreover, Senator Wilkerson was emerging as one of the strongest critics of the powerful insurance industry in Massachusetts. In fact, she held the position of chair of the Joint Committee on Insurance (1996–98) when she was indicted on misdemeanor charges for failing to file federal income tax returns over a period of several years.

Senator Wilkerson pleaded guilty and agreed to pay the taxes she owed in addition to the penalties. Nevertheless, she was placed under house arrest and probation by a state court judge. To many, this action seemed to be an excessive judicial response. Her legislative colleagues, many of whom she combated regarding key social and economic issues, called for her ouster from the Senate. The Republican governor at that time, Paul Cellucci, proclaimed that she should resign or be removed for irresponsible behavior as an elected official. However, the black community and other supporters mobilized on behalf of the senator. Blacks were generally outraged that the media, in particular the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald*, were unfair and racially paternalistic in their coverage. Except for the *Bay State Banner*, the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald* seemed possessed in presenting the senator's detractors, in particular Reverends Rivers, Brown, and Hammond, as spokespersons of the black community.

Black ministers organized a prayer service at Charles Street A.M.E. Church in support of Senator Wilkerson and in opposition to the negative editorials

and press releases. These activist ministers included members of the Black Ministerial Alliance, specifically Reverend Roberts, Reverend Michael E. Haynes, and Minister Don Muhammad. More than a thousand individuals attended the rally to offer support to the senator. As described in a *Boston Globe* story, "The prayer service at Charles Street AME church was like a purification ritual: Minister after minister from Boston's largest Black churches embraced the transgressor and, as if through a laying on of hands, restored her power. When the city's Black clergy last week rallied around embattled State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, one prominent minister was missing—the Reverend Eugene Rivers, who now stands accused of trying to kick the city's leading Black politician when she was down, after she pleaded guilty to failing to pay taxes for four years."³⁰

The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston supported Senator Wilkerson. Reverend Roberts, in his role as president of coalition, announced that money would be raised on behalf of the senator in order to help her pay the back taxes. As he stated, "We are aware of the nature of her problem and acknowledge the importance of adherence to law. . . . We are also aware of the importance of grace and forgiveness in the face of human error. We are not among those who believe it is right to shoot our wounded."³¹ As a result of the actions of this faith-based coalition, the state senator emerged from this episode as yet a more influential player and progressive leader in the politics of Boston and Massachusetts. The overwhelming community support she received during this travail, which was led by activist black ministers, served as a show of political force that was noted by many. Although stories in the *Boston Globe* consistently reported major splits in the black community regarding whether or not the senator should resign, the senator had overwhelming support among her constituents. In fact, in her next electoral bid in 1998 she easily won reelection with overwhelming voter support, receiving 74 percent of all votes cast in her state senatorial district. In the predominantly black wards of her district she garnered a near-unanimous 84 percent. This victory also reflected and represented an endorsement of the work of the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston as a major political player in the black community.

As a result of these episodes of mobilization there have been attempts to develop greater collaboration and communication within the alliance. Reverend Roberts proposed the idea for a four-point covenant signed by all members of the alliance. This covenant, which was adopted at the Charles Street A.M.E. Church in 2000, includes four proposals for guiding the statements and actions of ministers: (1) speaking well of other churches; (2) agreeing to pray for other churches in a show of solidarity and support; (3) communicating with each other about potential transfers of church members; and (4) consistently meeting to share information and resources that would strengthen interfaith partnerships. The position of the alliance and its

leadership is that the message contained in this covenant is key in helping faith-based organizations in the black community work together and that it stands as a model for other community-based organizations to follow.

CIVIC ADVANTAGES OF FAITH-BASED COALITIONS

Both coalitions have served to increase the civic capacity of the black faith-based sector in Boston. There are a number of civic advantages that the Black Ministerial Alliance and the Ten Point Coalition utilize in the political arena. One advantage is that these organizations can attract greater amounts of external funding due to the fact that the institutional infrastructure is not a church-based one. Many foundations may be hesitant to fund faith-based organizations directly but not resistant to fund separate organizations established by a group of churches. One example of this approach is the Black Church Capacity Building Program, initially established by the Hyams Foundation. The purpose of this effort is the provision of technical assistance to churches interested in becoming involved in human service and community revitalization programs. Under this initiative, technical assistance and training includes developing strategic planning, financial management, leadership development, business empowerment, and information technology. But the services are distributed through an institutional conduit rather than directly to individual churches.³²

Another advantage of faith-based coalitions is that their work and impact ultimately has to be built on some degree of consensus and legitimacy. There is a degree of "built-in" accountability in the work of the two networks in representing the interests of the black community because the legitimacy of the organizations ultimately is dependent on how groups of ministers work together and how they are received in the entire black community. Accountability can be overlooked if civic involvement is based only on the work of individual ministers or churches. In the latter case, civic involvement is based on the work of an individual minister acting upon his or her own initiative rather than on a community agenda that has to enjoy some support beyond one church or minister. Furthermore, the framework represented by faith-based coalitions is less dependent on the charisma of individual ministers or the particular civic orientation of individual churches. Thus, formal networks that require cooperation for decision making allow for the expression of a greater variety of opinions in the black community.

Additionally, the faith-based networks described here can also serve as buffers that allow individual churches to participate in civic issues considered controversial by congregants. For example, the Black Ministerial Alliance has participated in many efforts to raise awareness about the problem of HIV/AIDS in Boston's black community. It was a cosponsor of the "Week

of HIV/AIDS and the Black Church” with the “Who Touched Me Ministry” in 1998. The coalition has organized numerous educational activities regarding the problem of HIV/AIDS, which allows many black churches with hesitancy to participate as a coalition partner. Another important civic advantage presented by the two coalitions is a mechanism for incorporating new African-descent groups into African American religious networks. There are increasing numbers of immigrants from Central America, the Caribbean, and African nations who can be welcomed and served by these coalitions, perhaps in more effective ways than by individual congregations. This is important because of the increasing “ethnicization” of the black community in Boston. The non-African American black population is increasing.

These groups include Haitians, Nigerians, and people from other parts of Africa and the Caribbean, as well as some Latino groups from Panama and the Dominican Republic. These newer immigrant groups in Boston’s traditional black community are establishing their own churches or joining more established and older black churches. There are some religious institutions, including the Nation of Islam’s Mosque #11, that have made efforts to respond to this increasing ethnic diversity. Mosque #11, for example, broadcasts its weekly program, “Hour of Power,” in Spanish. One of the points in the Ten Point Coalition, as another example of its outreach, is to develop curriculum for schools that reflects both black and Latino cultures. The kinds of formal networks and strategic coalitions described here can be an effective way for incorporating and giving voice to this increasing ethnic diversity in Boston’s black community.

Finally, a major advantage of these networks is the potential of strengthening considerably the political clout of black elected leadership. Although the possibility of factionalism with established leadership is possible, there is also the possibility of an enhanced collective leadership. While the black community has realized political breakthroughs in the 1980s and 1990s, many feel that the political potential has not been actualized. Boston’s city hall is composed of a strong mayoral form of government, with thirteen members on the city council. This council is composed of four at-large members and nine district representatives. The school committee is appointed by the mayor. Although the black, Latino, and Asian population of the city now represents the majority of the population, there are only two black city councilors and one Latino member of the city council. Except for the mayoral run of Melvin King in 1983, the only black candidate to win an at-large city council seat during the last two decades was Bruce Bolling. The relative weakness of black political influence has meant that local government and other sectors have leeway in deciding whom they wish to work with in the black community. The coalitions do represent resources that if utilized collaboratively with other sectors and leaders could considerably enhance the political influence of the black community.

Along with these challenges, and with the political disagreements between activist ministers as described above, this study points toward a need for the two coalitions to (a) generate greater levels of communication and collaboration between the groups; (b) pursue a greater level of programmatic and even financial independence; and (c) expand systematic attempts to work with other sectors, including elected officials and community-based organization representatives. As proposed in the beginning of this chapter, faith-based coalitions can represent a new political tool for enhancing the political and economic well-being of Boston's black community. These networks can be arenas for developing and debating policy and political issues. Such arenas can have the weight of collective decision making based on input from institutions that enjoy legitimacy and command potentially effective resources for political mobilization.

The faith-based advocacy networks described in Boston have evolved into another intermediary institution in the black community. Like many community-based organizations they provide human services, manage programs, represent newcomers, seek funding and resources, and interact with political processes and infrastructures. It is critical for the well-being of the black community but also for Boston that faith-based coalitions seek collaboration on a range of political and economic issues and that the coalitions also reflect accountability in the work they do on behalf of the black community. Teamwork based on public policy agendas that strengthen the black community socially and economically is a major responsibility cast upon these two coalitions.

NOTES

1. Roger A. Clemetson and Roger Coates, *Restoring Broken Places and Rebuilding Communities: A Casebook on African-American Church Involvement in Community Economic Development* (Washington, D.C.: National Congress for Community Economic Development, 1993).

2. Myrna P. Mandell, "Community Collaborations: Working Through Network Structures," *Policy Studies Review* 16, no. 1 (1999): 44.

3. Based on their national survey Lincoln and Mamiya estimated that there were probably less than 5 percent black women clergy in the black denominations; see C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 289.

4. See Marjorie B. Lewis, "Public Sector and the Black Church Partnerships: A New Public Policy Tool," *Trotter Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 27.

5. Fredrick C. Harris, "Religious Institutions and African American Political Mobilization," in *Classifying by Race*, ed. Paul E. Peterson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

6. Harris, "Religious Institutions and African American Political Mobilization."

7. Hubert Jones, "The Status of Institutions in Boston's Black Community," in *The Emerging Black Community*, ed. Phil Clay et al., 269 (Boston: William Monroe Trotter Institute, 1985).

8. One of the most informative reports describing the civic history of the black church in Boston is written by Robert C. Hayden and was published by the Boston branch of the NAACP in 1983. Hayden compiled a comprehensive institutional history of ten prominent black churches established in Boston between 1805 and 1913. The author shows that these black churches were major providers of education and youth services to its congregations in earlier periods. See Robert C. Hayden, *Faith, Culture, and Leadership: A History of the Black Church in Boston* (Boston: Boston Branch of the NAACP, 1983). See also George E. Haynes, "The Church and Negro Progress," *The Annals* 140, no. 229 (November 1928); Arthur E. Paris, *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982); and James Oliver Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1999).

9. The following articles, while informative, suggest that the black church's involvement in Boston civic and political issues is new. See Jenny Berrien and Christopher Winship, *Should We Have Faith in the Churches? Ten-Point Coalition's Effect on Boston's Youth Violence* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1999); and Michael Jonas, "The Street Ministers," *Commonwealth: Politics, Ideas and Civic Life in Massachusetts*, Fall 1997, 37. See journalist James Walsh's claim in the *Star Tribune* (2 July 1997): "Just when did Boston's neighborhood activists and Black churches take an aggressive role in fighting gang violence? It wasn't 1989 . . . it wasn't 1990 . . . it was the Morning Star [Baptist Church] incident of May 14, 1992." And despite many articles praising the work of black churches with the Boston police department throughout the 1980s and 1990s, see, "New Partners for the Police" (editorial), *Boston Globe*, 18 February 1998.

10. Jones, "Status of Institutions," 303.

11. Jones, "Status of Institutions."

12. Jones, "Status of Institutions," 304.

13. For reviews of the earlier community work of black churches see Betsey A. Lehman, "Marchers Rap Crime in Black Community," *Boston Globe*, 29 May 1983; Ethan Bronner, "Boston Churches Tackle Community Issues Again," *Boston Globe*, 22 December 1985; Jonathan Kaufman, "Roxbury Man Ministers to Teenagers," *Boston Globe*, 7 February 1989; Don Aucoin, "Tobacco Road Under Siege: Boston's Black Pulpits Join Crusade Against Cigarettes," *Boston Globe*, 25 April 1994; Diego Ribadeneira, "Hands Together Against Aids: Black Clergy Unite in Service of Healing," *Boston Globe*, 24 February 1997; "Aids Awareness in Black Churches" (editorial), *Boston Globe*, 1 March 1997.

14. Richard Chacon, "Black Ministers Group Says Panel Should Remain Appointed," *Boston Globe*, 26 September 1996.

15. Adrian Walker, "Minister Don Draws on Islam to Fight Boston Street Crime," *Boston Globe*, 22 July 1989; see also Robert A. Jordan, "An Unusual Friendship," *Boston Globe*, 18 April 1987.

16. "Former School committee Head to Lobby for Appointed Panel," *Boston Globe*, 9 March 1996.

17. "70 Religious leaders, including 30 Black ministers, endorse Mel King for Mayor," *Boston Globe*, 5 August 1983.

18. See Carol Pearson, "There is No One in the Minority Community Who Has Done More for Young People," *Boston Globe*, 9 December 1985; also, Patricia A. Smith, "From Roxbury with Love: Mike Haynes Exquisite Hand Pulled At-Risk Young Men out of the Maelstrom," *Boston Globe*, 7 July 1992; and a brief biography of his work in Kimberly R. Moffitt, "A Profile of the Reverend Michael E. Haynes of Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury Massachusetts," *Trotter Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1997).
19. Richard Higgins, "Salute for a Shepard Restored" *Boston Globe*, 6 November 1990.
20. "Faith-Based Economic Development Initiatives in New England," *Communities and Banking*, Fall 1999.
21. In *The Black Preacher in America* (New York: Morrow, 1972), Charles Hamilton focused on historical and contemporary aspects of the black preacher's life, with particular emphasis on leadership in the black church and black communities. In a chapter titled "Preachers and Political Action," he identified three types of preacher roles of political activism at the local level, including the church-based local activist who serves in this capacity on the basis of being a leader of a prominent or large church; the community-based local activist. Religious leaders in this capacity take an active part in local electoral politics as well as in mass-oriented pressure-group politics; the third type of preacher activist uses the church as a specific base to launch and conduct civic programs of various sorts. This type of preacher is much more public and mass-oriented in his approach than the first type and, unlike the community-based activist, combines church organization with the specific program of action. While not being opposed to electoral politics, the church-based programmatic activist focuses on using the church structure to achieve secular goals such as jobs, housing, health care, and educational facilities.
22. Herbert H. Toler, "Rivers of Babylon: A Harvard Man Brings the Gospel to the Crack House," *Policy Review* 4 (Fall 1994): 68.
23. Don Aucoin, "Boston Clergy Urge Crusade on Violence," *Boston Globe*, 25 May 1992.
24. "Raising Responsible Youth in Troubled Times: The Promise and Challenge of Church Involvement, a Boston Perspective" (1999).
25. Adrian Walker, "Black Leaders Battle Over Influence: Clergy, Wilkerson Each Strain to Lead Voters to Kennedy," *Boston Globe*, 17 October 1994.
26. Letters, "Black Group Stresses Shared Views, Not Rivalries," *Boston Globe*, 29 October 1994.
27. Cheryl Bentsen, "Head Negro in Charge," *Boston Magazine*, 27 April 1998.
28. Mark Jurkowitz, "Without Apology the Boston Battle Goes On," *Boston Globe*, 4 April 1998.
29. Charles A. Radin, "Rivers Expelled by Group: Urban League Cites Criticism by Him," *Boston Globe*, 27 June 1998.
30. Peter S. Canellos, "Up roar Over Rivers Runs Deep," *Boston Globe*, 8 October 1997.
31. Adrian Walker, "Group of Ministers Support Wilkerson," *Boston Globe*, 26 September 1997.
32. Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, "Black Churches Teaming Up with Philanthropies Funds Fight Common Causes," *Boston Globe*, 11 October 1998.