

# “Real Good and Sincere Catholics”: White Catholicism and Massive Resistance to Desegregation in Chicago, 1965–1968

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*I don't know what most white people in this country feel. But I can only conclude how they feel from the state of their institutions. I don't know if white Christians hate Negroes or not, but I know that we have a Christian church which is white and a Christian church which is Black. I know, as Malcolm X once put it, that the most segregated hour in American life is high noon on Sunday. It says a great deal for me about a Christian nation. It means that I can't afford to trust most white Christians and certainly can't trust the Christian Church.*

—James Baldwin, interview on *The Dick Cavett Show* (1968)

*The Catholic Church in the United States, primarily a white racist institution, has addressed itself primarily to white society and is definitely a part of that society.*

—Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, Founding Statement (1968)

## I.

A white Catholic Chicagoan sat down at their typewriter to compose a letter to Bishop Cletus F. O'Donnell on June 17, 1965. They did not identify themselves by name because, as they put it, “there might be excommunication [sic].” Nevertheless, they addressed their auxiliary bishop with the proper salutation. “Your Excellency: The news item in last night's Daily News prompts me to write this to you. First, to set the record straight—please do not be so mistaken as to believe [sic] that all the faithful in this archdiocese is [sic] accepting the integration problem. We are not.” Much to the contrary, they

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insisted, "if a survey would be taken it would show [sic] shocking results in how many are against this serious act or [sic] integration."<sup>1</sup>

The "serious act" that incited the ire of this white Catholic, the item featured in the *Daily News*, was a dramatic instance of direct-action protest. On June 11, two hundred and fifty civil rights activists sat down in the middle of a major intersection in downtown Chicago and brought traffic to a halt. When newspapers were delivered in the days that followed, Catholics across Chicagoland were met with images of priests in collars and sisters in habits being led into paddy wagons alongside other protestors, smiling and singing freedom songs.<sup>2</sup> The five women religious and seven priests were, in truth, just a fraction of those arrested. Nonetheless, the sight of vowed representatives of the church engaged in civil disobedience made many white Catholics apoplectic, particularly on the heels of the photos of priests and sisters marching for voting rights in Selma, Alabama, just three months earlier.<sup>3</sup>

From the vantage point of the anonymous letter writer, the dangers posed by this protest extended far beyond stopped cars in the streets. Little separated integration from "disturbances, unrest, and even violence." "How can anyone," they wondered, "priest, bishop or archbishop, or cardinal expect such a difficult and unnatural acceptance for the ordinary everyday layperson?" The writer speculated that clerical celibacy blinded priests and nuns to the real dangers that integration posed to civil society. "Yes, this is easy for the clergy, as they do not have children, they do not have to come in close contact with this race. They do not have to live with them and try to accept something so unnatural." While remaining anonymous, a shift to the first-person plural revealed the writer to be married with children. They insisted, "we do not want our children to mix races through marriage. We are definitely opposed to this act." Then they invoked the divine. "God made the black man black and the white man white, and who are we to change this? Are we greater than God?" With quick strokes on a typewriter, this white Catholic deified the reigning white supremacist racial hierarchy in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The leap in logic, from integration to intermarriage to the disruption of divinely ordained racial order, was not especially surprising given the fact that this particular protest centered on the desegregation of public schools. The act of civil disobedience had been organized by the activist coalition known as the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO). It was just one in a series of marches and student walkouts planned for the summer of 1965. Together, these marches and walkouts were designed to force the resignation of Benjamin Willis. Appointed superintendent of

Chicago public schools just before the Supreme Court ruled segregated schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Willis had proven unwilling to desegregate the city's schools. Rather than allow Black children, who were then currently attending overcrowded and underfunded schools, to attend predominantly white ones with empty seats, Willis endorsed the use of aluminum mobile school units and instituted "double-shift" schedules.<sup>5</sup> The CCCO galvanized civil rights struggles in Chicago and garnered the support of the exceptional few white and Black Catholics fighting for racial justice.<sup>6</sup>

It is precisely this handful of Catholic interracialists against whom the enraged white Catholic wrote. They wrote the auxiliary bishop because, in June 1965, Chicagoans awaited appointment of their new archbishop. The letter served as a warning. "We would appreciate it," the anonymous author wrote, "if peace could be made available to allox [*sic*] us without a forced integration. It will remain to be seen, just how much peace can be made to exist if this is a forced issue on the Catholics of this archdiocese." Invoking the trope of the silent majority four years before Nixon would make use of it, the writer insisted, "many many people have remained remained [*sic*] quiet only waiting to see how far this will be carried. Then they will act." This white Catholic's anger was palpable in the increasing number of typos in this otherwise well-formatted, type-written missive. They felt an obligation, it seemed, to make sure their incoming archbishop was "fully informed." And "informed properly, rather than through those smooth easy talking words used as in the newspaper." They continued, ominously: "He ought to be fully informed too that even though this might be the richest archdiocese [*sic*], doesnt [*sic*] necessarily mean that it will remain so, once the Chancery office discovers that the donations and collections will be dropping off." "And this is going to happen [*sic*]," they warned. "Has it ever occurred [*sic*] too [*sic*] how many real good and sincere Catholics might leave the church? There will be many."<sup>7</sup>

The "many many people" the letter writer referenced did not stay quiet in the years that followed. This letter was just one of 173 archived by the archdiocese in 1965. Over 150 letters arrived from 1966 to 1967. At least 283 came in 1968. Across four years, more than six hundred white Catholic women and men in Chicago took the time to compose and mail letters to their archbishop that voiced their outrage and disgust at what they took to be official Church support for integration. (This is a conservative estimate, since this is simply the count of letters kept by the archdiocese. Countless other letters were written to individual priests and sisters and collected in other archives, not to mention all those not archived at all.<sup>8</sup>) The six

hundred letters sit tucked in three boxes labeled "Race Mail" in the middle of the massive John Cardinal Cody Papers Collection in the archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago. This innocuous title—"Race Mail"—is telling. It serves as a fitting metaphor for how many U.S. Catholic historians have conceptualized the relationship between race and religion. These letters, the label seems to say, are about "race." They do not reveal anything about Catholicism, about "religion."<sup>9</sup>

And yet, when they wrote their archbishop, try as they might, these hundreds of white Catholics could not keep their whiteness separate from their Catholicism. On the contrary, letter writers regularly described themselves as "real good and sincere Catholics" in the same sentences in which they reinforced a white supremacist racial order. "Are you trying to push the white people out of the Catholic Church?" an anonymous white Catholic queried in 1966. "We were born and raised in Chicago as Catholics. I go to communion almost every morning." "But," the letter writer insisted, "I will not attend Mass with any Negroes." That same year, Mr. George J. Burns declared, "[W]e are the parents of seven children in Catholic Schools from kindergarten to a senior in college and we are endeavoring to raise our boys and girls to be good Catholics and certainly not with the intent of their later integrating and marrying people of a different color." In 1968, Mrs. Florence Fako addressed her cardinal archbishop "as a devout and practicing Roman Catholic" who wished "to protest most strongly your proposed busing of negro children to parochial schools in the city and the suburbs." Although she acknowledged that, at least in theory, "all men are equal in God's eyes," she added that "each one of us must earn the respect of our fellow man. This, Cardinal, the vast majority of negroes have not done."<sup>10</sup>

White Catholics such as these letter writers are everywhere and nowhere in U.S. history.<sup>11</sup> Historians have been more interested in the relative religiousness of civil rights struggles than in the relationship between religion, racism, and massive resistance to desegregation. Likewise, U.S. Catholic historians have focused much more attention on the exceptional few Catholics engaged in interracial activism than on the many, many more white Catholics who resisted desegregation in one way or another. In this, white Catholics were unremarkable. In his landmark study that reframed white flight as a "political revolution," Kevin Kruse remarked that, "in the end, virtually all whites reacted to the course of civil rights change with some degree of opposition and distancing." Mark Newman made a similar point in his study of Catholics in the U.S. South, noting that, whether they were militant or moderate, most

white Catholic southerners were segregationists. Resistance to desegregation took many forms, from street violence to physical relocation and political mobilization. But whatever its form, resistance was the white norm. For precisely this reason, Elizabeth Gillespie McRae has encouraged historians to think of a “long segregation movement” in the way we have grown accustomed to thinking of a long civil rights movement: as a tradition that links the movement to maintain segregation in 1920s Virginia with the fight against court-ordered desegregation in 1970s Massachusetts. Whether they wrote incensed letters, mobilized in segregated suburbs, or fought on the front lines of massive resistance in cities, most white Catholics (like most white Americans) either opposed integration outright or resisted the means by which it would be brought about.<sup>12</sup>

In this article, I argue that these outraged letters, as well as other incidents of massive resistance, have much to teach us about U.S. Catholicism in the twentieth century, generally, and white Catholicism, in particular. Given widespread white Catholic resistance to desegregation, historians should consider the Race Mail collected in Chicago’s archdiocesan archives (and similar letters housed in archives elsewhere) essential sources for understanding white Catholicism in the postwar period. To fully reckon with what these letters reveal, I join others<sup>13</sup> in arguing that scholars must stop imagining religion and race to be easily isolatable categories and, instead, start thinking about religion itself as a racialized formation. This conceptual shift will illuminate the ways the very Catholicness of white Catholics—their institutions, their ideas, their actions, their bodies, their relationships, their lives—was structured by racial whiteness. This approach facilitates a fuller understanding of the lives of those who received communion every morning, prayed novenas every night, aimed to raise good Catholic children, expressed outrage at even the notion of equality for Black people, used racist epithets to name their nonwhite neighbors, and fought to maintain segregated suburbs. Equally important, it will compel us to appreciate how each of these acts is intimately bound up with the others.<sup>14</sup>

This article takes seriously, both as a historical claim and a theoretical intervention, the declaration by Black Catholic priests in April 1968 that the Catholic church in the United States is “primarily a white racist institution.”<sup>15</sup> If scholars of religion have occasionally called on historians to recognize what is distinctively *religious* about race and racism, I am calling on U.S. Catholic historians to recognize and interrogate what is distinctively *racialized* and, indeed, *racist* about white Catholicism. (Insofar as racialization and white

supremacy have been foundational to the United States as a national project, this call extends to scholars of U.S. religion as a whole.) I start by surveying the limits of the historiography of segregation and massive resistance as far as religion is concerned. Next, I suggest that scholars consider the ways that, for white Catholics in a particular context, Catholicism operated as religio-racial formation. Then, I engage in a close reading of the Chicago Race Mail that illuminates some distinctive dimensions of postwar white Catholicism. In the end, I argue that categorizing white Catholicism as a religio-racial formation helps us understand how whiteness shaped the Catholicness of white Catholics.<sup>16</sup>

## II.

Fifteen pages into Heather Ann Thompson's award-winning book, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*, she characterizes the corrections officers working at Attica prison as being "from small towns across western New York—overwhelmingly white, Catholic villages like Attica where high school graduates had few job prospects save a career in corrections." It is worth pausing to ask what *Catholic* signifies in this sentence. What work does the word *Catholic* do when added to the word *white*? The book is not "about" Catholics, yet white Catholics are present on virtually every page. Most are anonymous denizens of those "white, Catholic villages," but some feature prominently. Take New York state trooper Tony Strollo, for example. In introducing him, Thompson writes, "Tony Strollo considered himself a staunch patriot as well as a devout Catholic who attended mass every Sunday, avoided meat on Fridays, and made the sign of the cross whenever he drove past a church."<sup>17</sup> What does mass attendance, meat abstention, and ritual movement have to do with the armed retaking of Attica prison? When state troopers and correctional officers from "white, Catholic villages" shouted racist slurs at the mostly Black and brown incarcerated men, fired indiscriminately on prisoners and hostages alike, and force-marched naked prisoners over broken glass in retribution for the uprising, what significance did their Catholicness hold for understanding their actions? In Thompson's work, as in much of modern U.S. historiography, the answer appears to be not much, if anything, at all.

As Carolyn Dupont has documented, "though white religion played an important role in the fight against racial equality, many volumes in the recent rich outpouring on massive resistance include religion only incidentally in the narrative, if at all, and only a few

essays comprise the periodical treatments on the topic." If it has become standard to discuss the role of religion in civil rights struggles, religion is largely absent in analyses of segregation.<sup>18</sup> This, of course, does not mean that religious subjects are nowhere to be found. Instead, it indicates a lack of conceptual clarity on the subject. Gillian Frank has argued that "the history of sexuality has a Jewish problem," by which he means that, when Judaism is invoked in this historiography, "it appears as a descriptor without detail."<sup>19</sup> So, too, we might say the history of segregation and massive resistance has a religion problem—and, given its preponderance in that history in the urban North, a white Catholic problem in particular.<sup>20</sup>

Reading between the lines of this literature, *Catholic* usually serves as shorthand for so-called white ethnics, which, in turn, serves as its own shorthand for the descendants of white Europeans who immigrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Religious and class Otherness were presumed to separate "white ethnics" from "ordinary" whites; working-class white Catholics and Jews existed outside the middle-class Protestant white "mainstream." This usage is evident in whiteness studies classics.<sup>21</sup> It can be detected in discussions of "the Catholic vote," where *Catholic* is used to assess the political affiliation of "blue-collar" whites.<sup>22</sup> And it is implicit in Thompson's "overwhelmingly white, Catholic villages."<sup>23</sup> One problem with this shorthand is that the *ethnic* in *white ethnic* is neither stable nor naturally occurring.<sup>24</sup> But just as problematic is the way this use of *Catholic*—as a synecdoche for European immigrants and their descendants—reifies white, European Catholicism as representative of Catholicism itself. It ignores the fact that, speaking historically and hemispherically of the Americas, for instance, the majority of Catholic Americans are not now and never have been white.<sup>25</sup>

Religious historians have spent the past few decades challenging the absence of religion in modern U.S. historiography. Karen Johnson's *One in Christ: Chicago Catholics and the Quest for Interracial Justice* is a recent example of this corrective. Writing on Black and white Catholics committed to interracial justice, Johnson sets out to consider "religious concerns on their own terms, and not as cover for racial, economic, political, or social priorities." In this, *One in Christ* stands squarely in the tradition of John McGreevy's classic, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North*. McGreevy aimed to "take religion seriously" in the study of race in the twentieth-century urban North. Rather than simply "cataloging" instances of Catholic racism, he insisted historians must understand the ways "religion had

structured" Catholic (by which he mostly meant white Catholic) responses to African American migration.<sup>26</sup>

Although McGreevy aimed to understand both sides of the Catholic divide on "racial matters," in the twenty-four years (and counting) since *Parish Boundaries* was published, U.S. Catholic historians in the twenty-first-century United States have been much more interested in interracialists and integrationists than in the white Catholics who opposed their efforts.<sup>27</sup> White Catholic racism features as a foil in these studies, but their emphasis is on exceptional interracial activists. This has had the cumulative effect of exaggerating the evenness with which white Catholics split on the subject of segregation and desegregation. Thus, if the history of massive resistance has a religion problem, one might say that U.S. Catholic history has a racism problem. Racism and support for segregation occupies comparatively little space in this historiography, despite the fact they defined how Catholicism was lived by large swaths of white Catholics.

### III.

Racism, these histories seem to say, is about race. Antiracism is about religion.<sup>28</sup> This formulation does not, however, hold up to historical scrutiny. What if we forgot, for the sake of analytical precision, that there was such a thing called *Catholicism* that we could cordon off as "religion"? If we did so, we would find it hard to maintain clear boundaries between what we ordinarily isolate as "the religious" and "the racial." In fact, at times we would be hard-pressed to even identify "religion" as an entity apart from "race."<sup>29</sup> What I suggest—and here I am following in the footsteps of a number of religious studies scholars—is that the things typically categorized as "religious" have always and already been formed by the forces we name with the shorthand "race." This is not to make religion a mask for some other, really real thing. Nor is it to render *religion* just another word for *race*. It is to say that there is no unracialized religion that can be analyzed on its own terms. Things typically categorized as *religious* are racialized in the midst of their living. Religion, itself, is a racialized category.<sup>30</sup>

Returning to white Catholic Race Mail will clarify what I mean by this. Let us begin with the letter that opened this article, the missive mailed by a "real good and sincere Catholic" in 1965. "Race" and "religion," as they are ordinarily isolated, are both present. Yet, the conjunction that separates one from the other (race *and* religion) establishes a distance between the two that is not readily apparent in the letter itself.<sup>31</sup> How would a historian define what it meant to be a

“real good and sincere Catholic” on the evidence of this letter if “many real good and sincere Catholics might leave the church” if the archdiocese integrated? It seems clear that one constitutive element of “real good and sincere” Catholicism is resistance to integration, at least as far as this letter writer was concerned. “Many many people have remained quiet only waiting to see how far this will be carried,” as the letter writer put it, but they will rise up and resist if necessary.<sup>32</sup> This writer staked a claim on “real good and sincere” Catholicism and directly connected it to the maintenance of a segregated society.

We certainly do not have to take one letter writer’s word for it. Another, again writing in 1965, described herself as “a Catholic who has stood by as a silent soul long enough,” one who stands “along with all the others of sincere belief.” Once more, we should pause and ask, what did the word *Catholic* signify for her? For one, this woman insisted that all those of sincere belief knew to whom the city belonged. “Men had to sweat and skimp for years to build Catholic churches, schools, both public and Catholic, build decent neighborhoods,” she wrote, and “for what?????????” According to this white Catholic woman, “it is not up to the white lay man to accept the colored under such low standards which are contrary to the teaching of the Catholic and other churches.”<sup>33</sup> When read in aggregate, it is clear throughout these letters that when writers called themselves *Catholic* they claimed the word for *white* Catholics. When they catalogued years spent in Catholic schools, masses made each week, and rosaries prayed each day before launching into diatribes against “forced integration,” violations of “law and order,” and the moral threats posed by “the colored race,” they revealed that *their* Catholicism did not represent a race-neutral “religion.” When we resist the impulse to write these hundreds of letter writers off as “bad Catholics,” and, if we refuse to cordon these letters off as being “about race” rather than religion, what remains is evidence for a religio-racial formation we can name *white* Catholicism.

In the words of these six hundred Race Mail letter writers, whiteness and Catholicness were inseparable from one another. When letter writers in the 1960s referred to themselves as “real good and sincere” Catholics, when journalists in the 1970s wrote about “Catholics” protesting attempts to desegregate schools through busing programs, when pollsters referenced “the Catholic vote” in the 1980s, and when historians then and since discussed “American Catholics” coming of age in the postwar United States, more often than not they meant *white* Catholics. Given the fact that archives across the country contain thousands of letters such as those

catalogued as Race Mail by the Archdiocese of Chicago, given the fact that white Catholics fought on the front lines of massive resistance to desegregation in the urban North (and stood alongside white Protestants in the South), it is time for historians to not only name white Catholicism as such but to think through what it would mean to conceptualize racialization as foundational for U.S. Catholic history.

Judith Weisenfeld once asked whether, “if we can imagine something called ‘black religion’ . . . might we identify something called ‘white religion?’” Instead of thinking about whiteness as merely non-Blackness or the absence of race, she queried,

Can we recognize the varied ways religious discourses have contributed to the production and reproduction of racial categories throughout American history and often lent divine authority to racial hierarchy and notions of white superiority? Can we tease out some of the ways that a white person’s racial status in America might shape their religious experience and do so differently in different locations and times?<sup>34</sup>

These Race Mail letters answer in the affirmative. They illuminate how invocations of “Catholicism” produced and reproduced racial categories and maintained white supremacist racial hierarchy. They also reveal the ways whiteness shaped the Catholicness of white Catholics in a particular location and time. Prior generations of white Catholic Chicagoans may have fought among themselves for ecclesial power and control of parish neighborhoods—Irish against Polish against Italian, and so on. In the 1960s, however, McGee and Murphy, Kokaska and Kaminski, Maggio and Formaciari, Scheib, Schoondermack, and Sloan, together, asserted their white Catholic claim on the city as they wrote from neighborhoods and suburbs across the Chicago area.<sup>35</sup> The Race Mail is revealing because it documents white Catholic attempts to reassert their power in response to the perceived threat posed by civil rights struggles. In so doing, this Race Mail helps us better understand the ways white Catholicism operated as a religio-racial formation in the lives of white Catholics.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV.

What follows is a preliminary attempt to identify some essential elements of white Catholicism in the postwar urban North. Needless to say, the three themes I have isolated here are not the only ones present. What is more, as we will see, these three overlap

with one another across the collection. Nevertheless, I have isolated them because they reveal significant distinguishing features of white Catholicism in a particular historical moment.

### *Law and Order Obedience*

First, the Race Mail letters frequently invoke the formative role parishes and parochial schools played in the making of “good Catholics.” We should ask, therefore, what was it that these institutions inculcated? In 1965, references to Catholic education were followed swiftly by invocations of “law and order” and expressions of anxiety over the dangers activist priests and nuns posed to children. Mrs. Chowe remarked, “The Catholic nuns taught me that mountains can be moved by prayer and humility not by shouting, showing off.” In her youth, she reflected, “nuns were intelligent [*sic*] saintly they taught us to pray and accept our cross and we will earn heaven and above all to respect and obey all laws. When religion interferes in this its [*sic*] shameful.” Another 1965 letter writer who signed as “A Chicago Catholic” said they “send our children to Catholic schools where the Nun’s [*sic*] are suppose to teach abstinence and respect for law and order. And what do they do? Yes, go out parading, sitting down on sidewalks, conduct not become [*sic*] of a woman let alone a nun.” “I am nauseated with the mere thought that I may have unknowingly subjected my children to the teachings of smirking women . . . who defy the laws of the country,” one white Catholic woman wrote. Mr. H. A. Hamilton, described by his pastor as one of the most respected members of the parish, wrote “as a Catholic father attempting to raise his children in a proper and fitting manner.” He resented “the conduct of nuns”: “How are we parents to explain to our children that law and order are necessary to our way of life?”<sup>37</sup>

It is crucial to note that white Catholic “law and order”—sometimes described as “obedience to civil and moral authority”—was gendered. White Catholics understood women religious to be special embodiments of the wider Catholic commitment to obedience to church authority. This made them, even more so than priests, special targets of ridicule and violence when they had the audacity to engage in civil *disobedience*. Ms. Genevieve Sloan refused to even “call those law breakers nuns.” These “women” had destroyed the reputation of the church. Sloan summarized an underlying sentiment that appeared in many letters. Race Mail writers understood Catholic teachings on obedience to civil authority to be sacrosanct and associated violations of that obedience with a deviance that was gendered and racialized. Women religious effectively nullified their

status as white women and as vowed religious by participating in protests.<sup>38</sup> “When those supposedly dedicated to Christ, [*sic*] lay in the gutters with filthy men and women defying city laws and the duly elected mayor’s directives we teachers are finished,” Sloan concluded. “No longer have we a Christian example of why just authority must be obeyed.”<sup>39</sup> Women religious were typically tasked with the education of children. If that education was devoted, in no small part, to an education in obedience to civil and moral authority, then even the civil disobedience of an exceptional few proved too threatening.

But why was the violation of law and order so threatening? Two factors at work here would have been the Catholic celebration of obedience as a virtue and deep suspicion of social disorder, which John McGreevy outlines in *Catholicism and American Freedom*.<sup>40</sup> But we must also attend to the influence of this particular commitment to order. “Law and order,” in this context, represented the rule of law that safeguarded a segregated racial order. When H. A. Hamilton wrote, in another letter, that “common sense [has] deserted our religious” and asked, rhetorically, “are we to raise a generation of children with no respect for law,” he echoed white segregationists in the South and the North who framed civil rights activists as lawbreakers, outside agitators, and rabble-rousing criminals. Hamilton was not alone in this. Mrs. Anne Murphy exclaimed, “what terrible damage do [protesting priests and nuns] do to the image of the Catholic Church which has always so represented dignity and respect for authority.” Mr. Peter Meyer signed as “a very hurt Catholic” and described “the defiance of the law by any Catholic priest and nun or laymen” as tantamount to desecration of the cloth.<sup>41</sup> Again, it is worth asking what constitutes “the Catholic faith”—who are “the Catholic people”—if priests and sisters *misrepresented* it by marching for equal rights for Black people? What is the proper “image of the Catholic Church” if it is ruined by racial justice? These letters convey, in photo-negative, an image of a *white* Catholic faith, a *white* Catholic people, and a *white* Catholic church—a Catholicism, it should be said, that we could contrast with that of the Colored Catholic Congresses of the late nineteenth century or that of twentieth-century Catholic Interracial Councils.

It is telling that even letters written in support of civil rights, few though they were, confirmed this connection between Catholic religious formation and white racial formation. Mrs. Elaine Sniegowski insisted, in 1966, that the problem of white Catholic racism rested with the failure of church leadership. “Why is it that pastors refuse to prepare their people for living with their Negro brethren until after trouble has begun?” Ms. Diane Kelly agreed: “I

attended Catholic schools from 1st. grade through my 1st year of College. Never was I taught anything about the Negro other than the fact that he was brought here to be a slave and Lincoln freed him." Mr. Thomas Prost recognized that much of the most violent resistance to civil rights in the city was led by white Catholics, which saddened him. Yet, he added, "to defend the many, for they too are God's people, they are the sheep. Where, for the most part, have the pastors of the sheep been?"<sup>42</sup> These archival outliers illuminate an important point about the emotions expressed by letter writers. They were not just angry but also ashamed. A deep sense of betrayal courses through the letters. We can see this in some of the anonymous signatures common across the *Race Mail*: "A disgusted Catholic," "A disenchanting Catholic," "A disillusioned Catholic," "An ashamed Catholic," "An ex-Catholic." For many, their critique represented a reluctant conclusion, one experienced as painful insofar it appeared to contradict their self-understanding of what it meant to be Catholic in the first place.

H. A. Hamilton and many other white Catholics would have denied the accusation that they opposed civil rights. They viewed themselves, much to the contrary, as steadfast defenders of the Catholic principles of obedience and order. Nevertheless, we would do well to remember the context in which "law and order" was being invoked—namely, in opposition to the fight for equal rights, in resistance to the desegregation of public and private institutions. Elizabeth Gillespie McCrae, reflecting on the historiography of the long segregation era, has pointed out the interpretative problems posed when historians uncritically deploy the terms used by their subjects. Massive resistance to school desegregation in the urban North, for instance, tends to be labeled "anti-busing." As McCrae notes, however, "busing was the means to create integrated schools and overcome residential segregation; anti-busing advocates were against busing, which meant they supported the persistence of racially imbalanced or segregated schools."<sup>43</sup> Likewise, open-housing marches were designed to pressure public and private officials to desegregate neighborhoods; when white Catholics opposed those marches, they either supported the persistence of segregated neighborhoods or refused to pay the personal cost demanded by desegregation.

### *Policing the Political and the Spiritual*

When sisters and priests engaged in civil disobedience, they provoked calls of "law and order." When bishops declared segregation a sin and integration a "moral decision," they provoked

something else. John Patrick Cody was installed as archbishop of Chicago in August 1965. Arriving from New Orleans with a reputation as a racial liberal, he quickly became the focal point for white Catholic ire.<sup>44</sup> In July 1966, Cody endorsed the efforts of the Chicago Freedom Movement—an alliance established between the local CCCO and Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference in its effort to expand civil rights struggles into the urban North. The new archbishop positively positioned the civil rights movement alongside the Second Vatican Council as two pieces of a “gigantic social revolution” in his official statement and mandated that this statement be read from the pulpits of all four hundred and fifty Chicago parishes.<sup>45</sup> Mr. Robert Jogult summarized the overwhelming response of *Race Mail* writers when he insisted, “as a member of the Catholic Faith,” that “the open housing drive of Dr. King goes beyond the bounds of proper religious activity and is an unfortunate excursion into the area of political activity.” Others were less eloquent. A few of the “Good Catholic people from the North west side” admonished Cody to “please keep your nose out of Politicks [*sic*], mind your church.” “An outraged and harassed Catholic” insisted that Cody was “not the spiritual head of the Catholic Church” but, instead, “a politician—a whipping boy—a dictator.” They accused Cody of driving “thousands of Catholics away from the Church” and said he would be better off joining forces with King and starting “another religion.”<sup>46</sup>

These accusations evince the sense that white Catholics took *their* Catholicism to be “spiritual,” not political. To be more precise, white Catholics policed the boundaries between what they considered legitimately “Catholic” and what they understood to be an invasion of “politics” into the purportedly pure “religious” realm. This is a second essential element of white Catholicism. The distinction between the religious–spiritual and the secular–political is not unique to Catholicism, of course. It is fundamental to the modern category of “religion” itself.<sup>47</sup> In the case of white Catholic *Race Mail*, it was explicitly racialized. The insistence that church leaders not let “the political” intrude upon “the spiritual,” in this case, meant not letting civil rights intrude on white Catholic life. This was clear when writers insisted integration had nothing to do with religion. “As a resident of Chicago for more than half a century, and as Irish and Catholic as yourself,” one man resented Archbishop Cody’s “intrusion into the racial turmoil which besets this city today.” He felt, “like 99 per cent of the Catholics in this community, that all of your time and efforts might better be expended in religious endeavors rather than [*sic*] in fomenting strife among the races which almost certainly will lead to riots and bloodshed.” “The

role of the Church, as we see it," he argued, "is not in politics, but in the salvation of souls." Anthony Giovanetti likewise dictated the line between the political and the spiritual. He wished Cody "would put less emphasis on preaching especially of integration and more emphasis on communion on which Christ said 'DO THIS IN COMMEMORATION OF ME.'" "Catholics are duty bound to hear & assist the celebration of the Mass & to hear the gospel," he reasoned, "but as far as integration is concerned that does not have anything to do with what Christ preached on earth."<sup>48</sup>

Miss Mary K. Cordial reinforced this distinction two years later in her forceful objection to parochial school busing. She framed her letter as an "animadversion" for "[His] Eminence," an admonition aimed at awakening him "to the peril you are bringing not only on the residents of Chicago but upon the welfare of the Catholic people." She asked rhetorically whether, by supporting busing as a means to desegregate schools, Cody was "willing to accept the blame for a Nazi-like destruction of the white race and the ultimate result of being brought with the Catholic hierarchy [*sic*] of the United States before a Genocide Convention?" As far as Cordial was concerned, Black people posed an existential threat to "the welfare of the Catholic people" and "the white race," although the difference between the two in this letter remained unclear. So long as Cody supported desegregation, he remained complicit in a forthcoming white genocide. His only salvation would be to abandon integration (i.e., the political) for the eternal truths of the church (i.e., the spiritual). "[T]he sincere members of the once glorious faith" would listen to Cody, Cordial concluded, if he could assure them that he "taught the truth of the Catholic religion and teach the observance of the Commandments and that you have not become a tool of the jackals of society, the race mixers." Cody superseded his role as religious leader—he became "a tool of the jackals of society"—to the extent that he transgressed the proper boundaries of "faith" and allowed civil rights to intrude on (white) religion.<sup>49</sup>

Even when letter writers did not precisely delimit the difference between the spiritual and the political, the contrast became clear against the backdrop of the Cold War. White Catholics protected the purity of "religion" from the "politics" of civil rights. Meanwhile, those same white Catholics consistently called for a recommitment to anti-communism. "Another Disenchanted Catholic" condemned Cody for making "statements on the side of the communist dominated negro people agreeing with the principle of total integration." When he did so, Cody should understand himself to be making them "as a private citizen because you are definitely not speaking for the vast majority of Catholics (those that

support the Church).<sup>50</sup> Whenever a letter writer rejected the fight for racial justice as “too political” but doubled down on the anti-communist struggle against the Soviet Union, they clarified the racialized lines between the political and the religious.<sup>51</sup> The politics of anti-communist struggle had a place within the bounds of proper religious activity. The quest for equality for Black citizens did not.

Race Mail from 1968, which objected to school desegregation, regularly made this Cold War comparison. White Catholic parents insisted that “forcing” families to desegregate schools was tantamount to totalitarianism. “You have made yourself a big dictator,” Stanley Zabinski argued, “caring only about what you want and what you believe is good for the people of the Chicago area. Well, we the white catholic people don’t agree with any of your nonsense.” Zabinski wanted “the old catholic religion back,” and he insisted that “these are not only my views and beliefs but also my neighbors [*sic*].” Thomas P. and Mrs. S. Murtaugh agreed. No “member of the Catholic clergy, who do not have children, have the right to dictate to us what should be done with our children.” “This is one of our freedoms,” they wrote. “We do not want to go down the road to dictatorship, communism, or fascism, we want to remain a free people.”<sup>52</sup> Again and again, “religion” and “freedom” were framed on one side of a dividing line.

The other side—occupied by civil rights, racial justice, and demands for desegregation—was defined as communist, dictatorial, and downright anti-Catholic. Mrs. John C. Fonuke drew this divide when, “once again pen in hand,” she wrote Cardinal Cody to protest his stance on busing. “I do not feel that priests, bishops etc. who live in well-to-do highrises and sheltered monasteries should dictate housing, busing etc. Their vocation is to guide the souls of their parishioners.” In other words, the vocation of the vowed religious was to shepherd souls. Residential and educational desegregation—these were politicians’ tasks. Fonuke continued, “the church and the state are separate and should remain so.” When priests and bishops convened “closed meetings to discuss my children’s welfare, not yours, if you please, but mine,” they violated that sacrosanct boundary. This “is not my idea of Catholicism,” she wrote, “but more of Communism.” She prayed that the Blessed Virgin Mary—that steadfast Catholic Cold Warrior—might guide Cody’s mind.<sup>53</sup>

### *Representatives of the Real*

The third defining feature of white Catholicism is, arguably, the most fundamental. White Catholic letter writers presumed they represented “real” Catholicism. Most could not fathom the existence

of nonwhite Catholics. Those that could took nonwhite ways of being Catholic (e.g., Black, Latinx, Asian, etc.) to be particular and culturally specific in contrast to the universal, “real” Catholicism of European immigrants and their descendants. To be clear, these white Catholics were staking a *claim* on religious authenticity, making an *argument* for a particular understanding of what it meant to be Catholic. As historians, we should be wary of taking them at their word. Their Black Catholic contemporaries certainly did not. When the ten Black bishops declared, in 1984, that Black Catholics could be both “authentically Black” and “truly Catholic,” they were, among other things, directly challenging the idea that European Catholicism was somehow equivalent to real Catholicism.<sup>54</sup>

The argument that white Catholics were representatives of the real became explicit when white Catholics were confronted with Black Catholic claims on Catholicism, especially when it came in the form of liturgical innovation. The fact that some letter writers policed ritual practice is telling, because the letters were not primarily “about” liturgical change. For example, in her 1966 letter objecting to archdiocesan support for the Chicago Freedom Movement, Mrs. Irene D. criticized clergy “catering to African bongo-bongo to be used in the Masses—catering to Negro priest Clarence Rivers who is writing Masses with Negro-beat.” Father Clarence Rivers was a transformative musician, liturgist, and theologian who spearheaded a revolution in Black Catholic liturgical life in the 1960s and 1970s. Meanwhile, Mrs. D. wondered “what the Hell is happening to my Church?” Note the ownership she, as a white Catholic, took over *her* church. “No wonder,” she concluded, “Catholics are leaving the Church. Stop this goddam [*sic*] catering to Negroes!”<sup>55</sup>

In some instances, white Catholic claims on “real” Catholicism were wielded as shields against accusations of racism. Letter writers frequently deployed *Catholic* as a racial category and, when they did so, it operated in ways that anticipated the “colorblind” rhetoric of the post-civil rights era.<sup>56</sup> This is apparent in the 283 letters sent in 1968 that objected to Archbishop John Cody’s plan to desegregate a few parochial schools with a modest busing program.<sup>57</sup> “Operation Hospitality,” the name given to this short-lived program, was designed to parallel a public school busing program by transporting select Black students from inner-city parochial schools to outer-city ones.<sup>58</sup> Predictably, it provoked the ire of white Catholics who thought “forced busing” merely “for the sake of integration,” as many put it, was a dangerous and decidedly un-Catholic idea. A common argument against the program was that “Catholic money” should not be spent on “non-Catholics.” One letter bore the signatures of sixty-eight parishioners who strongly opposed the

program. "We have paid dearly to give our children a Catholic education (as dictated to us by our church)," they wrote, "and can honestly see no reason why we should take in non-Catholics into our schools tuition free, merely to create a racial balance."<sup>59</sup>

The word *Black* did not appear once, and, yet this letter objected to the enrollment of "non-Catholics" to "create a racial balance." The word *Negro* was nowhere to be found, but, still, the letter ended by preemptively defending signatories against the accusation that they were "bigots." How could they be bigots, the letter asked, when they included teachers, church ushers, businessmen, concerned parents, Holy Name Society and Mother's Guild officers, and the like? We can see here how white Catholics struggled to reconcile the tensions between a personal disavowal of racial animosity, on the one hand, with their tacit support for segregation, on the other. It was important for these white Catholics to note that their opposition to creating "racial balance" in schools was motivated not by racism but by "religious" concerns. This letter thus offers insight into the ways certain white Catholics worked to maintain a privileged position within the reigning racial hierarchy while rejecting the overt anti-Black racism of their contemporaries. Regardless, what is also clear in this letter is that *non-Catholic* operated as code for *Black* and that this coded language allowed white Catholics to object to desegregation while maintaining their innocence of racial bigotry.<sup>60</sup>

Not all writers, however, wrote in code. Many explicitly racialized the distinction between Catholics (by which they meant *white* Catholics) and Black people. This was the case for the 1966 writer who signed as "A Founding Member of St. Ethelreda's Parish." As they saw it, "an overwhelming majority of the Catholic people in Chicago today . . . most certainly do not approve of your alliance with a segment of the population which will destroy the Church here completely if you continue to encourage this minority to invade all white communities which have been loyal supporters of the Church all through the years." Whether or not they were accurate in their claim to represent "the overwhelming majority," here *Catholic people* served as a synonym for "white communities which have been loyal supporters of the Church." Another 1966 writer rejected the notion that "the working man" should be "expected to accept these [Black] people who are illiterate, filthy and immoral as his neighbor." They closed by advising Archbishop Cody "to learn a little bit more about the feelings of the majority of Catholics in the city, to which you are a relative stranger, toward the 'open arms' attitude concerning the Negro population. This majority built the Catholic churches in Chicago and supported Catholic education

down through the years. The well of their generosity may soon run dry.”<sup>61</sup> Here again, “the majority of Catholics” served as an antonym to “the Negro population.” When letter writers made this rhetorical move and claimed to speak on the behalf of the Catholic “majority,” they certainly did not mean to include the more than seventy thousand Black Catholics in the city at the time, not to mention the growing number of Mexican Catholic Chicagoans.<sup>62</sup>

By far the most common racialized usage of *Catholic*, however, was the invocation of Catholic formation as a means to buttress anti-civil rights, anti-integrationist, and anti-Black arguments. The convention of opening outraged letters by claiming “good Catholic” standing and citing years of membership in Catholic institutions was so prevalent that it sometimes seemed as though it were the invocation of a prayer.<sup>63</sup> Mr. Stanley Werdell, writing in 1965, declared that he was “past sixty years of age, born of and raised by Roman Catholic parents,” and had “never been ashamed of my religion until our Nuns and Priests commenced to engage in the so-called ‘Civil Rights’ demonstrations.” He signed as “A very disillusioned Catholic.” That same year Mary Wollenberg reported that, “as a staunch Roman Catholic for twenty-three years and having attended Catholic schools for sixteen years, I have never been so shocked, horrified, embarrassed and disgusted by the conduct of a group of nuns at a recent civil rights demonstration.” Edward Armruster, writing from a U.S. Air Force base in Florida a week after the Marquette Park riots in 1966, stated, “I have been a Catholic for all my 34 years and consider myself a good Catholic.” “Personally I cannot see Priests and nuns participating in these civil rights movements,” he reflected. It is “a disgrace.” These sentiments echoed across the Race Mail. “One time I was very proud of my twelve years of Catholic Education . . . but this week-end has made me very bitter about it.” Another writer complained, “[I] have been a Catholic all my life and educated in Catholic schools. . . . Regarding integration—too much fuss is being made over it.”<sup>64</sup> Each time a letter writer claimed Catholicism while opposing integration, they reinforced their argument that *real* Catholics were white supporters of the reigning racial order.

## V.

These are just a few of the defining features of something we can identify, historically, as *postwar white Catholicism*. To be clear, when I say “white Catholicism,” I do not merely mean a Catholicism practiced by people who happened to be white. I mean that the

Catholicism of white Catholics was a religio-racial formation; that white Catholicism was forged in and contributed to the forging of the (colonial) power relation we name by the shorthand *race*, which governs who belongs within a community and who is alien to it.<sup>65</sup> The white Catholicism categorized in this article was, to be sure, historically and culturally contingent, such as anything else we study. To be white and Catholic in the United States in 1968 was not the same as to be white and Catholic in 1868, nor is it the same today. Categorizing white Catholicism as a religio-racial formation allows us to analyze the distinctive dimensions of that formation in all its shifting historical and cultural specificity as it has changed over time. In the case of Chicago's *Race Mail*, when white Catholics deployed the word *Catholic* to describe some people but not others, when they insisted that obedience to law and order superseded the struggle for civil rights, when they made sure no "political" efforts at racial equality intruded upon the proper "spiritual" sphere of the Church, when they identified those elements that could be included under the rubric of "real" Catholicism and those that could not, when white Catholics did these things, and more, they reinforced the governing white supremacist racial hierarchy in the United States and revealed the ways whiteness structured their Catholicism.

Consequently, it is critical that we name them for who they are. A reluctance to call white Catholics *white* (and to have that word signify something substantive) courses through U.S. Catholic history. Books are written about Latino Catholicism and Black Catholicism and Asian Catholicism. Yet, when it comes time to talk of European Catholics and their descendants, historians tend to prefer *ethnic* or *immigrant* and, eventually, just *American* as their moniker. When we refuse to name white Catholicism, we fail to fully understand what it meant to be Catholic for millions of people in the twentieth-century United States. Whiteness was not peripheral but fundamental, not epiphenomenal but formative of the Catholicism of white Catholics in the postwar period. This recognition compels us to reconsider U.S. Catholic history in the twentieth century as a whole. In this retelling, the white Catholic mobs that met civil rights activists with bricks and slurs would prove just as significant as the exceptional priests and sisters who marched for interracial justice, if not more so, and white Catholic massive resistance would marshal more space than the paltry paragraphs devoted to it in surveys. To be clear, this is not a call to continue to center white Catholics at the expense of all others in our studies of U.S. Catholicism. To the contrary, it is to take the Black Catholic conclusion that the Catholic Church is "primarily a white racist institution" as the starting point for historical inquiry rather than merely a provocative polemic. And to say it is "*primarily*

a white racist institution" is also to make space for alternative, antiracist Catholicisms, as Black Catholics did and still do.

To name white Catholics as such and to classify white Catholicism as a religio-racial formation is not to make the crass claim that all white Catholics everywhere were and are "racist" in the common sense of the term, in the sense that implies intentionality and animus (although this is not to let white Catholics off the hook on that count either).<sup>66</sup> Rather, it is to shift attention away from futile attempts to discern whether or not white religious subjects "sincerely" held racist beliefs in the privacy of their hearts.<sup>67</sup> We should direct our attention, instead, toward the state of the institutions that made and were made by "real good and sincere Catholics." Conceptualizing white Catholicism as a religio-racial formation allows us to assess how certain uses of the term *Catholic*, certain modes of Catholic formation, certain structures of Catholic institutions, and certain ways of embodying Catholicism reinforced white supremacist racial hierarchy. This is to approach race and racism in the spirit of James Baldwin, quoted in the epigraph to this article. In a 1968 interview with Dick Cavett, Baldwin dismissed the question of whether "white Christians hate Negroes" as immaterial. He could "only conclude how they feel by the state of their institutions."<sup>68</sup> When we reframe white Catholicism as a religio-racial formation, we can move beyond ultimately unknowable questions about the hearts and minds of millions of white Catholics and, instead, unpack all the ways white Catholics shaped, and were shaped by, white supremacy.

And so, let us end where we began, with white Catholic Chicagoans outraged and ashamed at the church's apparent support for civil rights. Martin Luther King, Jr., came to Chicago in the summer of 1966, one year after our opening letter writer sat down at their desk to address their bishop. Once there, King led the Chicago Freedom Movement in open housing marches through the segregated southwest side of the city. In late July and early August, as marchers emerged from Marquette Park and entered overwhelmingly white Catholic neighborhoods, families flooded out from their homes to hurl abuse. "White Power!" they shouted. "Burn them like Jews!" they cried. White men carried Confederate flags and handmade signs with messages such as, "The Only Way to End Niggers is Exterminate."<sup>69</sup> Members of the mob pulled a Black priest, Father George Clements, out of a car and beat him. Someone shouted "this is for you, nun!" as they threw a brick that hit Sister Mary Angelica. They cheered as the blood soaked through her habit.<sup>70</sup> King reported to news cameras, "I have never in my life seen such hate. Not in Mississippi or Alabama. This is a terrible thing."<sup>71</sup>

Hundreds of white Catholics wrote letters in the weeks that followed to express their support for the Marquette Park mob. A profound sense of betrayal was acute in Mrs. Margaret Reynolds's letter, written to the archdiocesan newspaper. Referring to Sister Mary Angelica, she said, "that nun should not have entered that white area with the Negroes to demonstrate against whites." Reynolds articulated with a typewriter what white Catholics had said with signs and stones that day. "Whites are particularly bitter against whites who work against them," she wrote, "whether they be nuns or priests." Reynolds hoped to return nuns to what many white Catholics took to be their proper place. They should "mind their own—attend to other social work, but don't demonstrate against their own. Whites will not take that any more." She concluded with a show of solidarity. "As devout a Catholic as I am," she wrote, "my temper would show if a white person—nun or priest—worked against me and my white people. I'd be likely to throw a rock."<sup>72</sup>

Historians have long framed the civil rights movement as a turning point in twentieth-century U.S. religious history. Given the overwhelming opposition of white Catholic communities to integration, I contend that the Marquette Park riots and other instances of massive resistance should be considered signal events in U.S. Catholic history. Likewise, U.S. religious historians should devote as much energy to understanding the role religion played in the long segregation movement as they have to religion's role in civil rights. It is time to seriously consider, as Black Catholics and so many others already have, the ways race and racism has been formative of white Catholicism and, indeed, white U.S. religion writ large.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Anonymous to Bishop Cletus F. O’Donnell, June 17, 1965, “Race Mail,” John Cardinal Cody Papers Collection, Archdiocesan Archives of Chicago, EXEC/C0670/18#6. The bulk of this article’s archival sources are drawn from three boxes labeled “Race Mail” in the executive records of the John Cardinal Cody Papers Collection in the Archdiocesan Archives of Chicago (AAC); these sources are henceforth abbreviated as “Race Mail” followed by the AAC designation. Throughout this article, I strive to name Race Mail writers in the manner in which they wrote. In other words, when I employ titles (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Mr. and Mrs., etc.) this indicates how letter writers identified themselves. My usage of gendered pronouns reflects the ways individual writers identified in the text of their letters. For example, if a writer signed “Mr. and Mrs.” but did not indicate whether the letter writer was husband or wife, I use the gender neutral *they* and *theirs*.

<sup>2</sup>Karen Johnson discusses this protest and the shocking images it produced in *One in Christ: Chicago Catholics and the Quest for Interracial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 204.

<sup>3</sup>For more on Catholic participation in the 1965 march for voting rights from Selma to Montgomery, see Amy L. Koehlinger, *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Andrew S. Moore, *The South’s Tolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945–1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); and Mark Newman, *Desegregating Dixie: The Catholic Church in the South and Desegregation, 1945–1992* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018).

<sup>4</sup>Anonymous to O’Donnell, June 17, 1965.

<sup>5</sup>Michael W. Homel, “Willis Wagons,” in *Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1357.html>. For more on the struggle to desegregate Chicago’s public schools, see Dionne Dadds, *Desegregating Chicago Public Schools: Policy Implementation, Politics, and Protest, 1965–1985* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and Elizabeth Todd-Breland, *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018). For more on the

Chicago Freedom Movement, see Mary Lou Finley, Bernard LaFayette, Jr., James R. Ralph, Jr., and Pam Smith, eds., *The Chicago Freedom Movement: Martin Luther King Jr. and Civil Rights Activism in the North* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

<sup>6</sup>Johnson, *One in Christ*, 203–204.

<sup>7</sup>Anonymous to O'Donnell, June 17, 1965.

<sup>8</sup>This includes, for instance, the Daniel J. Mallette Papers housed at the Chicago History Museum. Mallette was a diocesan priest and author who received extensive personal hate mail in response to his civil rights activism.

<sup>9</sup>Special thanks to Katharine Gerbner for pointing out how the archival designation “Race Mail” mirrored the ways many historians have treated “race” and “religion” as separate categories.

<sup>10</sup>Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, undated 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#9; Mr. George J. Burns to Archbishop John P. Cody, July 12, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#17; Mrs. Florence Fako to John Cardinal Cody, January 30, 1968, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/20#3.

<sup>11</sup>This point builds on and borrows from Kevin M. Schultz and Paul Harvey, “Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 1 (March 2010): 129–62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfp087>.

<sup>12</sup>Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 15; Newman, *Desegregating Dixie*, x; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Although they precede McRae’s book, a number of books would fit well in “long segregation movement” historiography as it pertains to segregation outside the Jim Crow South. These include works on massive resistance and the rise of the New Right, such as Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), and Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). This also includes literature on Black freedom struggles, the urban crisis, and suburbanization, such as Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), and Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>13</sup>See footnotes 16 and 30.

<sup>14</sup>Here, I am inspired by Robert A. Orsi, who, on the subject of Catholic clergy sex abuse, provocatively wrote, “Would we who are scholars of religion not all agree—and who ought to know this better than we do—that on balance, in the long perspective of human history, religions have done more harm than good and that the good they do is almost always inseparable from the harm?” Robert A. Orsi, “The Study of Religion on the Other Side of Disgust,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 47, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2019), <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/springsummer2019/the-study-of-religion-on-the-other-side-disgust>.

<sup>15</sup>“Statement of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, 1968,” in *Stamped with the Image of God: African Americans as God’s Image in Black*, ed. Cyprian Davis, OSB, and Jamie Phelps, OP (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 111.

<sup>16</sup>My use of *religio-racial formation* throughout is deeply indebted to both Judith Weisenfeld and Sylvester A. Johnson. Weisenfeld argues that “all religious groups in the United States could be characterized as religio-racial ones, given the deeply powerful, if sometimes veiled, ways the American system of racial hierarchy has structured religious beliefs, practices, and institutions for all people in its frame.” Judith Weisenfeld, *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity during the Great Migration* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 5. Meanwhile, Johnson insists that, as scholars, “we must begin to appreciate religion as, at times, a racialized formation, one located squarely at the center of bio-politics.” Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 400.

<sup>17</sup>Heather Ann Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy* (New York: Vintage, 2016), 15, 161.

<sup>18</sup>Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 3. Dupont cites this historiographical gap in her footnotes. Dupont, *Mississippi Praying*, 241–42, fn. 1–2. To cite a few specific examples here, Kevin Kruse focuses on the ways racial, social, economic, and political factors shaped white segregationists in Atlanta but does not address the role of religion in white flight to the suburbs. Kruse, *White Flight*, 6–15. Taylor Branch’s discussion of the violence Martin Luther King, Jr., faced in open housing marches on Chicago’s southwest side emphasizes ethnic identity over religious identity. Taylor Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 508–11. Ethnicity and class appear to

trump religion in Thomas Sugrue's treatment of massive resistance in the urban North. Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty* (2008), 419–20. Although Elizabeth Gillespie McRae occasionally references *Christianity*, for the most part, the word serves as an empty signifier. McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 148, 214.

<sup>19</sup>Authors describe how “informants grew up in a ‘Jewish family’ or have a ‘Jewish background.’ Yet, readers are left to speculate what exactly this Judaism signifies. Does it mean ethnicity? Ancestry? Religious identification? Upbringing? Participation in some aspect of Jewish communal life?” Gillian Frank, “The History of Sexuality Has a Jewish Problem,” *Notches* (blog), April 6, 2017, <http://notchesblog.com/2017/04/06/the-history-of-sexuality-has-a-jewish-problem/>. Special thanks to Shari Rabin who first recognized the synergy between my argument and Frank's.

<sup>20</sup>Along with the influence of Frank, this also builds on and borrows from Jon Butler's classic essay “Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (December 2004): 1357–78, doi:10.2307/3660356.

<sup>21</sup>See, for instance, David R. Roediger's descriptions of the “Catholic Irish ‘race,’” “Irish Catholics,” and “the Catholic Irish.” David R. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007 [1991]), 133, 138, 140. See also Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Rutledge Classics, 2009 [1995]). Ronald P. Formisano offers one critique of this conflation when he discusses what he calls “the urban redneck myth.” Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004 [1991]), 234.

<sup>22</sup>Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 184.

<sup>23</sup>Thompson, *Blood in the Water*, 15.

<sup>24</sup>*Ethnicity* is a relatively recent idea that, as Sylvester A. Johnson puts it, functioned to unify Europeans “into a single, biologically homogenous race.” Sylvester A. Johnson, “The Rise of the Black Ethnics: The Ethnic Turn in African American Religions, 1916–1945,” *Religion and American Culture* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 150, n. 7. Johnson demonstrates how the invention of “ethnicity” simultaneously granted varied European races whiteness and denied African-descended peoples historicity. For more on the critical history of “ethnicity” see Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the*

*Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>25</sup>Sister Thea Bowman testified to Black Catholic belonging and the long history of African (and African American) Catholicism in her 1989 address to the U.S. bishops. Thea Bowman, "Being a Black Catholic," in *Sister Thea Bowman, Shooting Star: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. Celestine Cepress, FSPA (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1993), 29–37. Cyprian Davis's classic work, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), opens with an extended reflection on the long tradition of African Catholicism and its centuries-old roots in the Americas. See also Matthew J. Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migrations* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 6–7; and Johnson, *African American Religions*, 136–38.

<sup>26</sup>Johnson, *One in Christ*, 5–6; John T. McGreevy *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>27</sup>This literature includes R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947–1956* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); Koehlinger, *The New Nuns*; Paul T. Murray, "From the Sidelines to the Frontlines: Mathew Ahmann Leads American Catholics into the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 107, no. 1 (Spring 2014), 77–115; Timothy B. Neary, *Crossing Parish Boundaries: Race, Sports, and Catholic Youth in Chicago, 1914–1954* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); and Johnson, *One in Christ*.

<sup>28</sup>This point echoes one made by Kelly J. Baker, who illuminated the problems inherent in scholarly attempts to draw a "distinction [that] marks the religion of the hate movement as somehow not religion." Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915–1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 17–18.

<sup>29</sup>Malory Nye pushes this point to its furthest extent when he argues that, "if we were to draw a Venn diagram of this, the circle for religion would be contained completely within the circle for race." Malory Nye, "Race and Religion: Postcolonial Formations of Whiteness," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 31, no. 3 (2019): 231.

<sup>30</sup>A number of different disciplinary trajectories and intellectual traditions have contributed to this shift in how scholars understand the relationship between "religion" and "race" as categories. Those most formative for me in this article include M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*

(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); Johnson, *African American Religions*; Weisenfeld, *New World A-Coming*; Christopher M. Driscoll, *White Lies: Race and Uncertainty in the Twilight of American Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Nye, "Race and Religion"; Lucia Hulsether, "The Grammar of Racism: Religious Pluralism and the Birth of the Interdisciplines," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 86, no. 1 (March, 2018): 1–41, doi:10.1093/jaarel/lfx049; as well as Laura McTighe, "Introduction: Religio-Racial Identity as Challenge and Critique," in *Roundtable: "Religio-Racial Identity" as Challenge and Critique*, ed. Laura McTighe, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (June 2020): 299–303. My participation in the collaborative endeavors that produced that roundtable on "Religio-Racial Identity as Challenge and Critique" were especially generative in this regard.

<sup>31</sup>Both Michael J. Altman and K. Merinda Simmons note the implications embedded in the conjunction *and* that separates "religion *and* race." K. Merinda Simmons, "Identifying Race and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*, ed. Kathryn Gin Lum and Paul Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 25–39; Michael J. Altman, "Orientalism in Nineteenth-Century America," *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*, 125.

<sup>32</sup>Anonymous to O'Donnell, June 17, 1965.

<sup>33</sup>Anonymous to Chancery Office, undated 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#3.

<sup>34</sup>Judith Weisenfeld, "Forum: American Religion and 'Whiteness,'" *Religion and American Culture* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 29.

<sup>35</sup>Special thanks to Christopher Cantwell for encouraging me to explicitly illuminate this dramatic shift from inter-"ethnic" conflict to transethnic whiteness among urban Catholics.

<sup>36</sup>For more, see Matthew J. Cressler, "Centering Black Catholic Religio-Racial Identity, Revealing White Catholicism," in *Roundtable: "Religio-Racial Identity" as Challenge and Critique*, ed. Laura McTighe, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (June 2020): 304–28.

<sup>37</sup>Mrs. Chowe to Chancery Office, June 13, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#4; Anonymous to Bishop Cletus O'Donnell, June 13, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#4; Mrs. Lorice D. Englebrecht to Chancery Office, June 14, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#5; H. A. Hamilton to Daughters of Charity, June 14, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#5.

<sup>38</sup>This parallels a point Elizabeth Gillespie McRae makes with regard to the vitriol white segregationist women reserved for their peers who challenged the Jim Crow order. For example, many white women wrote to then-First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to protest her

purported “racial transgressions.” For these women, “the segregated social order defined them. The emotional intensity of their letters and their resolve to prevent change spoke to an investment in racial segregation that was deep and volatile.” McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 115. For another angle altogether on racial identity with regard to women religious ministering in African American communities, see Amy L. Koehlinger, “Project Cabrini: Becoming Sistahs,” in *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 176–97.

<sup>39</sup>Ms. Genevieve R. Sloan to Bishop Cletus O’Donnell, June 15, 1965, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#6.

<sup>40</sup>John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003).

<sup>41</sup>H. A. Hamilton to Bishop Cletus O’Donnell, June 14, 1965, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#5; Mrs. Anne D. Murphy to Bishop Cletus O’Donnell, June 13, 1965, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#4; Mr. Peter Meyer to Bishop Cletus O’Donnell, June 17, 1965, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#6.

<sup>42</sup>Mrs. Elaine Sniegowski to Archbishop John Cody, July 12, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#17; Diane K. Kelly to Archbishop John Cody, July 11, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#1; Thomas J. Prost to Archbishop John Cody, July 15, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#2. Although I have limited my study to Race Mail letters collected in Chicago from 1965 through 1968, Mark Newman tells a similar story with regard to southern white Catholic progressives, who “did not recall hearing segregation addressed from a moral perspective as children in Catholic churches, or in the segregated parochial or public schools they had attended. Newman, *Desegregating Dixie*, 87–88.

<sup>43</sup>McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 231. Nikole Hannah-Jones echoes this interpretative approach when she writes, “That we even use the word ‘busing’ to describe what was in fact court-ordered school desegregation, and that Americans of all stripes believe that the brief period in which we actually tried to desegregate our schools was a failure, speaks to one of the most successful propaganda campaigns of the last half century.” Nikole Hannah-Jones, “It Was Never about Busing,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html>.

<sup>44</sup>Cody struck a complicated figure, to put it mildly. McGreevy described him as “liberal on racial issues” but predisposed to wield “authority in extraordinarily blunt fashion.” McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 186. In short, by 1970, Cody found himself caught between white critics who thought he was too supportive of civil

rights and Black and white critics who thought he was too conservative when it came to issues of racial justice. See also Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*, 125–26.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in John T. McGreevy, “Racial Justice and the People of God: American Catholics, Civil Rights, and the Second Vatican Council,” *Religion and American Culture* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 234.

<sup>46</sup>Robert J. J. [illegible] to Archbishop John Cody, undated 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#4; Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, August 2, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#4; Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, undated 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#2.

<sup>47</sup>This literature is expansive, but a few different paths into the conversation include Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27–54; Gustavo Benavides, “Modernity,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 186–204; William E. Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Sacred Is the Profane: The Political Nature of “Religion”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Linell E. Cady and Tracy Fessenden, *Religion, the Secular, and the Politics of Sexual Difference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

<sup>48</sup>Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, July 14, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#15; Anthony Giovanetti to Archbishop John Cody, July 12, 1965, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#3.

<sup>49</sup>Ms. Mary K. Cordial to John Cardinal Cody, January 26, 1968, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/20#1.

<sup>50</sup>Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, July 27, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/19#2.

<sup>51</sup>Anonymous to Chancery Office, undated 1965; Mrs. Chowe to Chancery Office, June 13, 1965.

<sup>52</sup>Stanley Zabinski to John Cardinal Cody, January 31, 1968, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/20#3; Thomas P. Murtaugh and Mrs. S. Murtaugh to John Cardinal Cody, January 31, 1968, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/20#3.

<sup>53</sup>Mrs. John C. Fonuke to John Cardinal Cody, April 9, 1968, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/20#10. For more on Marian devotion and Catholic anti-communism, see Colleen Doody, *Detroit’s Cold War: The Origins of Postwar Conservatism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); and Robert A. Orsi, “U.S. Catholics between Memory and Modernity: How Catholics Are American,” in *Catholics in the American Century: Recasting Narratives of U.S. History*, ed. R. Scott Appleby and Kathleen Sprows Cummings (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

University Press, 2012). McGreevy notes the role anti-communism played in Catholic arguments against integration. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 105–6.

<sup>54</sup>“What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States,” September 9, 1984. See also Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*; Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis, OSB, ed., *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); and Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*.

<sup>55</sup>Mrs. Irene Dolan to Archbishop John Cody, July 17, 1966, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/18#16.

<sup>56</sup>Michelle Alexander writes extensively of the legal logics of ostensibly “race-neutral” racism in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010). See also Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Equality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

<sup>57</sup>Dionne Danna, *Desegregating Chicago’s Public Schools: Policy Implementation, Politics, and Protest, 1965–1985* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>58</sup>As historian Kevin Ryan has shown, although the program did “improve the racial views of the black and white participants,” the effort was far more invested in “preparing white youngsters” for an integrated future than it was in actually bringing about large-scale Catholic school desegregation. Kevin Ryan, “To ‘Prepare White Youngsters’: The Catholic School Busing Program in the Archdiocese of Chicago,” *American Catholic Studies* 128, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 51–77.

<sup>59</sup>Mr. Walter Swiatkowski, et al. to John Cardinal Cody, January 28, 1968, “Race Mail,” EXEC/C0670/20#3.

<sup>60</sup>Swiatkowski, et al. to Cody. This logic was not limited to individual white Catholics. It was eventually taken up by archdioceses as actual policies. The National Office of Black Catholics directly challenged the implications of this logic in its report on the crisis in Catholic education, published in 1976. Although the report acknowledged that “there is no question that the whole Catholic education system in this country has run into serious financial difficulty,” it stated that, “when Catholic officials say that there will be Catholic schools ‘where parishes can pay for them,’ they are stating obliquely that there will be Catholic schools in the white community.” “Special Statement: The Crisis of Catholic Education in the Black Community,” University of Notre Dame Archives, Joseph M. Davis Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, 1.

<sup>61</sup>Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, July 16, 1966, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#15; Anonymous to Archbishop John Cody, July 27, 1966, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/19#2.

<sup>62</sup>For more on Black Catholics in Chicago, see Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*. For more on Mexican Catholic Chicago, see Deborah Kanter, "Making Mexican Parishes: Ethnic Succession in Chicago Churches, 1947–1977," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 35–58; and Deborah Kanter, *Chicago Católico: Making Catholic Parishes Mexican* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

<sup>63</sup>Special thanks to Chandra Plowden for noting the ways "Race Mail," as a genre, at times seemed to mimic the structure of prayer.

<sup>64</sup>Stanley Werdell to Marillac Social Center, June 18, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#6; Mary Wollenberg to Bishop Cletus O'Donnell, June 16, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#6; Edward D. Armbruster to Archbishop John Cody, August 10, 1966, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/19#7; Miss Pat [illegible] to Chancery Office, undated 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#3; Mrs. J. B. Joan Cook to Bishop Cletus O'Donnell, June 13, 1965, "Race Mail," EXEC/C0670/18#4.

<sup>65</sup>My understanding of *race* is influenced by Sylvester Johnson, who defines "race [as] a state practice of ruling people within a political order that perpetually places some within and others outside of the political community through which the constitution of the state is conceived." Johnson, *African American Religions*, 394. This is related to what Patrick Wolfe means when he says "race is colonialism speaking." Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso Books, 2016), 117 (quoted in Nye, "Race and Religion," 9). Johnson is building on the work of Barnor Hesse and other scholars who have critiqued the tendency to overemphasize the human body as the sole site for "race." Barnor Hesse, "Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 4 (July 2007): 643–63.

<sup>66</sup>As Father Lawrence Lucas once put it, "to assume that when I conclude, 'the Roman Catholic Church in America is a white racist institution,' I mean that all Catholics are racists, would not be true. On the other hand, I do not say—nor should you misunderstand me—that there are merely a few racists scattered here and there among the throng of absolutely marvelous people who constitute the Church." Lawrence Lucas, *Black Priest/White Church: Catholics and Racism* (New York: Random House, 1970), 7–8. Six hundred letters from three years in Chicago may not "prove" anything in a quantitative sense, but I have already collected

hundreds of letters written by white Catholics in Boston in the 1970s that are similar in tone and tenor. I suspect that every Catholic diocesan archive in the country has likeminded letters, at least as long as their respective archivists decided to keep them.

<sup>67</sup>Christopher Petrella and Justin Gomer historicize this emphasis on racism as sincerely held personal animus in their essay “‘Not a Racist Bone in His Body’: The Origins of the Default Defense against Racism,” *Washington Post*, July 16, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/04/11/not-racist-bone-his-body-origins-default-defense-against-racism/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.d1336b5a17e9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/04/11/not-racist-bone-his-body-origins-default-defense-against-racism/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d1336b5a17e9). Scholars of religion will note the synergy between this narrow conception of “racism” and that of the modern category of “religion,” which is also often presumed to reside in and emanate from the sincerely held, and, thus, ultimately unknowable and unassailable, beliefs of the human heart. See Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>68</sup>James Baldwin on *The Dick Cavett Show*, season 1, episode 74, aired June 13, 1968, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_fZQQ7o16yQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fZQQ7o16yQ).

<sup>69</sup>Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge*, 510, 508, 510.

<sup>70</sup>Arthur Southwood, “Nun Injured in Violence Shocked, but Not Bitter,” *The New World*, August, 5, 1966. These incidents are described in McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 189–90 and in Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge*, 510.

<sup>71</sup>Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge*, 511. For more accounts of white Catholic massive resistance at Marquette Park in 1966, see also McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 186–92, and Johnson, *One in Christ*, 1–2, 211–13.

<sup>72</sup>Margaret Reynolds, “Letter to the Editor: Particularly Bitter,” *The New World*, August 12, 1966.

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**ABSTRACT** *Although the civil rights movement has long been framed as a pivotal turning point in twentieth-century U.S. religious history, comparatively little attention has been directed to the role of religion in what has been termed “the long segregation movement.” Likewise, Catholic historians tend to emphasize the exceptional few priests, sisters, and lay people committed to interracial justice over and against the majority of white Catholics who either opposed integration or objected to the means by which it would be achieved. This article argues that, in order to fully understand U.S. Catholicism in the twentieth century, scholars must reckon with the ways racial whiteness shaped the Catholicism of white Catholics. It takes as its primary source more than six hundred letters*

*written by white Catholics outraged and disgusted over the Archdiocese of Chicago's apparent support for desegregation between 1965 and 1968. These letters not only illuminate the inseparability of religion and race, but they also reveal that white Catholicism itself operated as a religio-racial formation in the lives of white Catholics. Given the overwhelming white Catholic (and white religious) resistance to integration, this article argues that the long segregation movement and massive resistance to desegregation ought to be included as signal events in the telling of U.S. Catholic and U.S. religious history.*