



BOSTON COLLEGE

BOISI CENTER
FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

Symposium on Religious Diversity and the Common Good Dinner Panel: Working for the Common Good in Boston

November 13, 2013

QUINN:

Thank you. Well, Father Neenan, who many of you know, would never give thanks for the food until he'd first tasted it. So on behalf of Boston College and Father Leahy, our president, who's unable to attend this evening, I welcome you all to this dinner and to the panel discussion that will follow.

It's been a long day, but a stimulating day full of interesting ideas and conversation, so my remarks will be brief. I don't want to stand between you and the rest of your meal. Actually, more accurately, I don't want to stand between me and the rest of my meal. So this evening comes as we end 18 months of activity celebrating Boston College's sesquicentennial – the 150 years since our founding in 1863, transition from a small commuter school in downtown Boston, educating mostly Irish and Italian boys to a nationally and internationally recognized university with 9,000 undergraduate men and women, and half again as many graduate students and professional students. Ranked among the top 21 – no, 31 universities in the nation, where I must admit we've been stuck for awhile. Number 31. And my hope is that next year, after my one year as interim provost, we finally break into the top 30, for which I'll take full credit and step down. Ora pro nobis.

By the way, this is also the hundredth year since we moved from downtown Boston to this beautiful campus. It's a double anniversary. And as some of you know, we're doubly misnamed.

We're not in Boston, although actually we are, in this particular building, but the main campus and our address is Newton. And we're not a college, but we're Boston College.

The earlier sesquicentennial symposia have touched on such topics as education and its role in democratic societies, religion and the aims of higher education, migration, the legacy of Vatican II, the challenges facing Catholic higher education, and just two weeks ago, the penultimate one was on energy, featuring our newly elected Senator Markey.

Tonight's panel discussion is about working for the common good, and Alan Wolfe will be introducing the panelists later. But let me be one of the first to thank our panelists tonight for sharing their time and showing us what we might learn from those who have made the common good the focus of their professional, public, and spiritual lives.

The phrase 'common good' is found in a variety of contexts. It's used by economists, like myself, legal scholars and practitioners, philosophers, political scientists, politicians. However, for Boston College, given our Catholic Jesuit identity, the concept has special significance. Educating men and women for others is our university motto and it's part of our institutional DNA. Our students are inspired and motivated and encouraged by the ideals that these words represent during their time here and, we hope, well beyond. So it's particularly meaningful for Boston College and for our sesquicentennial celebration that we should be discussing the common good in this final symposium of our three semester academic series.

This is the culmination of several years of planning and work, and I'd like to end by thanking everyone who played a role in our sesquicentennial series, of which there are many. But especially thanks to Erik Owens and Alan Wolfe of the Boisi Center for your tremendous efforts on this event. Erik is such a fabulous organizer, I've already asked him to do my funeral when the time comes. And to Courtney Hough and Frank Murtagh who managed and supported all of these sesquicentennial events and made all those sandwiches and wraps that you had at lunch. And Mary Lou DeLong and Father Terry Devino, who shared leadership in this entire sesquicentennial celebration.

This has been a great event. I'm looking forward to continuing our conversation after dinner. And now I would like to ask Father Terry Devino, Vice President and University Secretary, and head of the Sesquicentennial executive committee, to give the blessing. Thank you, Terry.

(applause)

DEVINO: So God will not mind when we pray, so this is good for us to be here. So let us conclude the day and enter into this evening and our discussion, again, by just pausing for a moment and allowing ourselves to be blessed by God and blessed by that companionship that we've shared here.

Boston College was founded by the Society of Jesus in 1863, with three teachers and 22 students, and opened its doors on September 5th, 1864. But the story of Boston College really began in 1534 when seven idealistic and open students at the University of Paris met in a chapel and vowed their lives to the service of God and the well-being of their fellow women and men. They were founders of the Jesuits, and they did not choose monastic life but instead went out to encounter and transform our world, committed to finding God in all things.

And so tonight, we gather as persons of memory, celebrating the works, the visions, the stories, the hopes, the ideals of this place of learning where minds and hearts have been transformed and where we have sent those minds and those hearts into our world, committed to finding God in everything.

Tonight we gather, grateful for a day that brought together women and men of every story, united in the struggle of transforming our fragile world. Tonight we gather at the conclusion of a tremendous day that has brought together journalists, academics, writers, religious and civic leaders devoted to the common good, and for this, oh, God, we are most grateful.

Tonight we gather and we come together to pray that God bless our companionship and our conversations, that God bless this meal and those who prepared it, and especially all those who go without. And in God's holy name we pray. Amen.

Welcome and enjoy.

WOLFE: (inaudible), thank you, good beginning. So I'm Alan Wolfe, the director of the Boston Center, and I could go on with long introductions about our very distinguished panelists, but in fact, they are listed here, and we're very short of time, so if anyone doesn't have this program with the list of our speakers, I will simply identify them by name, and by their present job.

So we begin over here with Amy Ryan, who's the president of the Boston Public Library, and it's a great honor to have you with us here, Amy. Then we've got Rev. Bryan Hehir, who's the Park Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice of Religion and Public Life at the Harvard Kennedy School, and is Secretary for Health and Social Services at the Archdiocese of Boston. And Mohammad Ghiath Reda, a founding member and spiritual leader of the Islamic Center of Boston. And Rev. Jonathan L. Walton, who's Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister of the Memorial Church at Harvard. And John McDonough the Interim Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools.

So let me begin the discussion this way. I'll use something I do in my classes all the time. I always tell my class – and it doesn't matter what class it is – that whatever the subject, whatever the class, there is always, without exception, an article in that morning's *New York Times* that can begin our discussion. And as it happens, there is an article in this morning's *New York Times* by a person many people consider the best political analyst in America, Thomas Byrne Edsel, whose wife Mary comes from a very distinguished Cambridge, Massachusetts family, and he wrote about the Boston mayoral election, and he had these really remarkable maps of how the vote went for the two mayoral candidates.

The point of the article was essentially that if you look at the distribution of the vote between the two candidates for mayor in Boston and you tried to use the old Boston racially hostile city – the Louise Day Hicks Boston – in any way it didn't overlap in any way whatsoever, the demographic composition of Boston has just changed so dramatically, and that this election really represents the emergence of essentially a new Boston electorate.

The primary focus of the article with Edsel's research in general was about race, but it immediately made me think about this panel tonight. How has the religious demographics of Boston changed, and how has that influenced the work that you do? I think, John, perhaps you experience this most directly as the interim superintendent of schools, so I want to begin with you. But I certainly want to hear from Amy as well on all of this, really.

McDONOUGH: Thank you. I was a little bit anxious about accepting this invitation tonight because it is difficult to talk about religion, per se, within a very public organization. But I do think that what we do on a day-to-day basis does have much to do with the interest of this conversation tonight.

Boston is an extraordinarily different city than it was 40 years ago. A representative of that is not only the electoral patterns in the city, but a description of who we serve. So within the Boston Public Schools, if you look at the Demographics of our students, we have 40% who are English language learners. About 47% who are from families that speak another language in their home. About 30% of our population is English language learners. Eighty-five languages are represented there, and our students come from 100 different countries.

If you look at it based on ethnicity, 40% of our students are English language learners, Hispanic, 36% are Afro-American, 19% are white, 9% are Asian. So the diversity of those that we serve is reflective of differences that we need to be mindful of in how we both approach what we put in place to ensure their success, but also how we are respectful of differences in an environment where we have definitions of uniform expectations and standards.

So I'm not sure if that's helpful in at least getting us into the conversation, if it doesn't answer your question.

WOLFE: No, it does indeed. I was wondering in particular what challenges – when we think about this religious and racial diversity, I think we automatically start thinking about the schools.

But of course, for the library, and especially in day and age, this must be a huge challenge you're facing.

RYAN:

Well, it is, and thank you, John, for running down the statistics because that was on my list to do. But the Boston Public Library's mission, which is carved in stone in our wonderful McKim building from 1885 is advancement of learning. So it really is about responding to our mission of really reaching out to people from all over the world.

Our roots go back into the early 20th century where people from all over the world turned to the Boston Public Library to learn English, but they weren't from Vietnam or China or Haiti. They were from Ireland and Italy and Eastern Europe. So it really is about just marching our mission along but expanding it to what it means today for the Boston Public Library and for the city.

We just opened a wonderful new branch library in East Boston. Do yourselves a favor and go over there sometime. It's a beautiful building on a wonderful park with a Y here and community garden and Adirondack chairs. It's a beautiful building designed by Bill Rawn. But we really challenged ourselves to how do we make the people of East Boston feel like this is their library? Because in many cultures they don't have the reference point of a free public library. They're suspicious, it's a government institution. They don't know they have to return their books. So we really wanted to go the extra mile.

There's 20 languages spoken in East Boston, so one of the physical things that we did to make them feel welcome is for each country represented by a language, we have a paver in the front of East Boston library with the name of the country, the capital, the miles from East Boston to Beijing or wherever, and then the direction. So you could even see on the opening day that people were looking for theirs – and they're not in alphabetical order, which, I'm like, what? Because I'm a librarian.

A little bit of the back-story is I was talking about this before the library was completed in East Boston, and there still are the Easties, the traditional East Boston people, so he raised his hand and he said Amy, you don't have Washington, DC. Thank you, that's a big favorite.

So we really just move ahead our mission of reaching out, advancement of learning from people from all over the world.

WOLFE: Thank you so much. Mohammad, what can you add to our reflections?

REDA: I don't have anything to talk about, Boston Library or – Actually, when I moved to Boston in 1974, there was one mosque in Boston, that's in Quincy. Currently probably I can count 12. I don't know every single mosque in there. In the mosques in Boston, there is probably no country in the world not represented in there. The diversity of Muslims in Boston is staggering. I can see those people speak different languages as original languages. Fortunately we speak to everyone in English.

WOLFE: The lingua franca, I guess, of – Now it's only by sheer coincidence that I left the two Harvard people for last. Really it wasn't intentional.

HEHIR: It was purpose, no question about it.

WOLFE: For having said that, I'll ask you, Jon. Does this spill over into your work as Memorial –

WALTON: Well, it does. It does in some ways. Let me just begin by thanking you, Professor Wolfe, thanking you, Professor Owens, for this invitation to be here tonight. This is really an honor and a pleasure. I'm a little intimidated, I must say, sitting looking from table to table. See Marie Griffith, see Omar McRoberts, Laurie Patton, my dear brother Reza Aslan – he and I used to teach together at UC Riverside, and all of these people who I teach regularly staring at me, that's a little intimidating.

It's also a little intimidating because we're here to talk about the common good in Boston. I came to the area in 2010, and since then I have just begun to wrap my mind around the corporation of Harvard and the People's Republic of Cambridge. I have quit gotten out into Boston yet. But in terms of what I do –

WOLFE: Boston's a suburb of Cambridge.

WALTON: Right. But in terms of the way that this kind of religious, racial diversity impacts my position as the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals. It's a good thing for the four years I've been at Harvard, every entering class at Harvard College has been more religiously and racially diverse than the year before, and that's a beautiful thing. That says something about not only Harvard's commitment, though we still have a lot of work to do, but also religious/racial commitment and class – commitment to disrupting as much as we have been able to do some of the class divides.

But having said that, I would also say that diversity for diversity's sake – we have to think about it and be honest. Diversity for diversity's sake is not a good thing because jail is diverse, prison industrial complex, but that's nothing we want to necessarily model our communities after.

So what are doing with our diversity? As it relates to my role at the Memorial Church, I want to really accentuate our diversity as it relates to religious faith communities. We're at a institution that was founded for the training of puritan ministers that has a kind of New England main line veneer on it. If it's about accepting religious diversity, so that we're all on a secularization narrative that takes us all to one place and does not accentuate and promote what Todd Pittinsky calls the positive power of difference, then I think we're missing an opportunity.

So I really think it's about trying to cultivate the conditions at Harvard University where we can have young men and women that will learn from one another, learn from the racial/religious difference, learn the ways not obscure it, how to face it, but actually accentuate it so that when they step into the halls of power, which many of them will, that they can begin to disrupt so that it does not simply look like a New England country club, but it can actually begin to look like the changing face of American society.

WOLFE: Thank you very much. And Bryan will be –

HEHIR: Well, when you talk about change and religion in Boston, that means change in the Catholic church because obviously if you go

back 40 years ago, it was not only dominant in numbers, it was dominant in culture. Fifty to 60 years ago, the one line slogan in the Boston Beacon Hill legislature was, what does number one think of it? And number one meant one person. His name was O'Connell. The legend was that he had someone that sat in the balcony, and if he raised his thumb up, it meant the vote was yes, and if he raised his thumb down, the vote was no. That's obviously gone, totally.

So the change is both in the context and the content of Catholicism. The change in the context is not only the diversity, which is obviously to be welcomed and is significant and pervasive. By the way, I was on the road today so I didn't read Thomas Edsel. I hope one of the points he made about the campaign, while the diversity was the dominant one, was the civility of the campaign. When I heard Governor Christie talk about how everybody's looking at New Jersey, he had reason to say that. But Boston had reason to say that in a time when politics has the atmosphere of mud wrestling, this was a civil campaign fought in a very good way.

But the context obviously is change, and interestingly enough, the change is not only the diversity and religious faith, but now my understanding is that five of the six most secular states in the country are in New England, and Massachusetts is one of them, at least as you judge by secularity of emphasis. So that's a huge change.

Secondly, within the Catholic community itself, in all honesty, you have to distinguish people who say they are Catholics, and people who participate as Catholic. There is a huge, huge difference there. People still identify as Catholics, but to be honest, the biggest single pastoral problem we have in this archdiocese is that we estimate that practicing Catholics in the sense of weekly mass attendance is 17% of the population. So that is an enormous, enormous change. So the change in the context in which we live, secularity and diversity, and change within the church in terms of we've got a huge pastoral problem that the cardinal is very focused on because 17% of self-identified Catholics go to mass each Sunday. Now you can argue is that a good standard or not, but that's a second question.

WOLFE: Thank you. Jonathan, I was very taken with this notion of a positive diversity, not just diversity for diversity's sake, so let me ask the school person and the library person – maybe the new mayor has already asked you this, but if the new mayor were to ask you to write a memo as to how your institutions could contribute to a positive sense of diversity, what could you do different?

RYAN: Well, there's a lot that we need to do. We're not where we need to be in terms of services. I think one of our issues is deeper in terms of the people who get masters in library science. It doesn't cull from a diverse pool so we have to catch up a little bit. We're working on that as a profession.

The other thing, too, is that I think if we really do a good job at reaching out to people from all over the world and from different ethnic groups, it's a big commitment in terms of the Website, in terms of outreach workers. So we do a lot in terms of conversation circles and programs and Chinese language story times. But there's a lot that we could more, I would say to the mayor – although maybe not my first meeting.

WOLFE: Any thoughts?

M: Evidence that we don't have it all right yet.

McDONOUGH: We still have an extraordinarily persistent achievement gap in our schools. We have made gains and I can say with confidence that compared to other large, urban school districts, we do well. But doing well is not good enough. There is evidence that the achievement gap, at some levels, has closed, but there's also disappointing evidence that despite years of focus and concentration, in some areas there has been no change in that achievement gap. So it does raise the issue for the next mayor.

What comes next? What are the strategies that need to be employed? In our district we no longer really talk about closing achievement gaps, we talk about eliminating them. Because ultimately, that is the goal. So there's a huge amount to be done but it gets back to the core of what does the level of diversity mean in that context. How does that translate for the educators in our system? What is our collective belief system? What are our

expectations of success for all students? And how are we sensitive to cultural differences that our students bring to us that need to be recognized in a way where we need to differentiate support. This is not about students not wanting to learn. This is about our ability to bring them to success. So that remains the large urban school district challenge in this nation.

WOLFE:

I also wanted, if I may, to pick up on a comment you made, Bryan, about how secular the northeast is and how secular Massachusetts is. If I may, I'll just refer briefly to some of my own work where I've been interested in European immigrant groups. In particular the big question that faces so many European countries about how to accommodate, how to deal, how to relate to Muslim immigrants. And I wanted to ask you because, for example in a country like Holland which I think people would generally consider the most secular country in the world, if you're a Muslim and you have the right to vote, the question you generally face is do I vote for the Christian Democrats because although I'm a Muslim and they're Christian, at least they're religious, and it's a common religiosity? Or do you vote for the left parties, which are thoroughly irreligious but say that they're friendly to the immigrants?

So I wonder about Boston Muslims. Are Boston Muslims likely to identify as those who are religious and see the other religiosity of other groups outside the community and find that this religiosity is what might build a common bridge against different –

REDA:

Actually for one thing, I would say we are honored to be sitting in such institution to debate and to talk about these things. Because debate and education go hand by hand. If we do not have education, we cannot debate.

Before I talk about the Muslim dilemma in voting, it is very interesting that you brought up the Netherlands. Actually, Jonathan Israel, a famous historian, very important historian, has said – and I paraphrase, I didn't bring any notes with me – he said that if we want to look at the origin, the roots of the enlightenment, we should not look at France or England, but we should look at the Netherlands. And the reason – and other authors agree with him, the reason was that 17th century Netherlands, the people pride themselves that their culture was different than other cultures because of unrelenting debate in which all the segment of the society participated in that debate. It was like an obligation.

People felt an obligation to listen to the opinion of the others. Unless we can cultivate such culture in our education, in our treatment to each other, to respect each other's opinion – not just respect it, but ask for it and listen to it and be able to have the respect to change your mind about it.

That thing that we do not have is especially in the political scene, that we do not have politicians who come and seek the opinion of different community to see what they think about particular issue. That should be our goal, all of us, to do that. The Muslims do not have an organization to vote for on person or another. Usually we try to advocate what will be best for the city, for the community, not on the basis of religious basis or political and international basis, because there are a lot of political international politics which might not affect any regular American person, but it might affect me, personally, for instance, what's going on in Syria, but I cannot really enter that in my decision who I'm going to vote for.

But I really think, unless we change the whole culture in the way we make the respect for each other, respect of different opinion, the diversity will bring then unity because people could understand each other. Now I want to say – I have to say – my hero is the former mayor of Boston because when we wanted to build the mosque in Roxbury, everything was all set when one of the newspaper here had a big article attacking the mosque and the people who are doing the mosque, and Mayor Menino stood fast and he allowed us to finish the project. I think it is a mosque which has participated in Boston affairs, and will continue to make changes.

WOLFE: One of things –

M: Mayor Menino will let you know that he is mayor until January 6th.

REDA: Right, he's still the mayor.

WOLFE: Still the mayor. And I gather he's going to be going to some other university with the word Boston in the title.

One of the things that 17th century Netherlands contributed to the world was the United States America, or at least New York City. But we're in Boston, and you mentioned about the origins of your position back in the puritan days. So we certainly had, back when we had either the puritans or their descendants and the various churches that grew out of that tradition what many people thought of as a kind of natural ruling class, and those people understood themselves that way, and Harvard understood itself as training a natural ruling class. But as you say, you're training leaders now. But these are not going to be leaders from one particular religious tradition acting in a kind of paternalistic way to everyone else. It's going to be a very different leadership that we're going to have.

So do you have any sense of what role you can play?

WALTON: What we hope. We hope we won't have just another class of (overlapping conversation; inaudible) [elites ruling in a] paternalist way. And that is, in some ways, how I see my role. I know that's the role of Father Hehir.

WOLFE: He gets the question next.

WALTON: For many of us, we are in a very – and I don't want to obscure the fact that we are in a very privileged position. I do not envy the work that you do on a daily basis in the communities. We are in a very privileged position because we are working with young people that, for the most part, were born on third base, and many of them think they hit a triple. So we know that they're going to be leaders, it's just a matter of what type of leaders that they're going to be. So it's really about reimagining leadership in such a way, where we understand that, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, any of us can be great because all of us have the capacity to serve. You just need a heart full of grace and a soul that's generated by love.

What does it mean to give oneself to a cause bigger than oneself? What does it mean to take one's privilege and one's power and one's access and be able to be strong enough and courageous enough to subsume oneself under a cause and give oneself to a purpose and a mission in life? We have students that are committed to that – many students from multiple faith communities that are committed to these very causes.

One of the things that I have come to discover – really it’s been a heartwarming point for me over the past two years in this position, is my engagement with “conservative evangelicals” on our campus. And that is to say, these “conservative evangelicals” – the culture wars of the ‘90s that many of us grew up with, they aren’t even on their radar screen. Issues of abortion, issues of where one stands on same-gender love, where one stands on religious diversity, ethnic diversity – it’s not even in their intellectual toolkits. For many of them, it’s just a given. But they are committed to service. They are committed to missions bigger than themselves. They are committed to the common good in many ways. They actually look at us at the Memorial Church, which in so many ways represents the main line as the progressive protestant tradition that I come out of. They look at us as the spiritually anemic, apathetic ones that come and we come together and we sing unsingable hymns and we go home and drink and because we stand in a particular area as it relates to a particular social tradition or a social custom, that we think all is well in the world.

And so it’s even this kind of disruption of where people stand theologically, how they view service, how they view commitment, and the ways that this is being informed by their faith tradition that actually makes me very hopeful for this generation.

WOLFE: Bryan, I wanted to ask you a similar question, but I’ll phrase it this way. We were very fortunate at Boston College to host and have in our midst for the last couple of years of his life the very distinguished political scientist, James Q. Wilson, who had made much of his career at Harvard. I remember him saying – I could be wrong, but I remember him saying that he and Pat Moynihan were the first two Catholics to get tenure in the College of Arts and Sciences at Harvard.

HEHIR: No, that’s wrong. The first person to get tenure was the professor of romance languages. His picture in St. Paul’s church.

WOLFE: Yeah, well, we may not have known of him, but yeah. But the point is that –

HEHIR: Moynihan probably said that.

WOLFE: It's only recently – yeah, Pat probably said it.

HEHIR: He really brought it to Harvard.

WOLFE: Yeah, but my point obviously is that universities like Harvard and Boston College, less so, I think, in terms of overall diversity, that this diversity has come very, very recently. It's come within some of our lifetimes. How do you see the future of Boston Catholics – educated, professional Boston Catholics dealing with a different world that's very, very different than the world that their grandparents and their parents lived in, which I think fair to say was more insular, was more parish-based, was less cosmopolitan.

HEHIR: Well, two things. One, I teach a different group than Jonathan. I teach very few undergraduates. So at Kennedy School, what I see for diversity – Kennedy School is 46% international as a school. So every class is drawn from all over the world. They also are older. The biggest program that I teach is the mid-career people, so they've been in government, in the military in various forms of NGOs for 10, 15 years, and then they come back. That is fascinating to watch. I have the Wexner students every year. The Wexner students are – it's a Jewish scholarship program for military and governmental professionals. Then I also have a number of people from the middle east, from various countries. So last year I have the military editor of *Haaretz*. He used to sit in the course on the ethics of war and peace beside Shanna. Shanna came from Germany but her family was from the middle east, and that kind of dialogue goes on.

In terms of Boston, my sense is that first of all you have to take into consideration how many people move to this area because they went to school here and come back professionally. So they don't know who Cardinal O'Connell is, nor do they know who Cardinal Cushing is. That whole background is simply not there. They're Catholic, but they don't carry the memories of no Irish need apply, or the Brahmins, or who sat in the vault in the financial – that's just not there. I've been in parishes in Boston, in Acton, Waltham, Cambridge, and now Wellesley, and you would have to explain that history to 80% of those parishioners. It just isn't there.

So they take the world as it is, and part of it is that they, themselves are quite secular in their orientation. They're training from business school is what sets the context, very often. So my sense is that I think it's very important to know the history. I don't think most people who make up the Catholic community today of Boston know the history. I'm sure Jon knows it, but I'm not at all sure that the folks I look at on Sunday know that history at all. And so I'm not positive exactly how that is going to impact the future. I see it in a classroom setting. What you see is that you have a chance here in Boston in this community to do things you can't do in other places, if I can just extend this one more minute.

I had Arafat's sister in law in class, and she then came to BC to do a degree at the ed school. She was really quite striking presence when she walked in the room. She was six feet tall and she was very, very vocal. She paired with a Jewish diplomat in the class on war and peace to do their presentation on war and peace. And then she told me, she said, over at Kennedy School, she said, this colonel from the Jewish military kept looking at me all the time and he finally came over and said to me, I think I know you. And she said, you should know me, you put my mother in jail. So then she said, I got to know him and I got to know his wife and they had a child and I used to go visit them. And she said that never could have happened in Israel. She said it just – or in – It just never could have happened. So there are settings here in this educational universe that have ripples in multiple other places, and that's a good thing to keep in mind, I think.

WOLFE: I think what you say about the Catholic students is pretty much true of Boston College – Catholic students who I don't think know much about their history, not only of Boston Catholicism, because we have Catholic students from all over, but the history of the church and so on. Although I think it's getting slightly better. This year I had a student –

HEHIR: I want them to know the history, but I don't bet on it.

WOLFE: I think maybe for the first time I had a student who actually knew that Martin Luther was a German leader of the Reformation and not a civil rights leader who marched on Washington.

Weren't you saying something today, Amy, to keep people in Boston?

RYAN: Yeah, (overlapping conversation; inaudible) –

WOLFE: Because something Bryan said about struck me as very relevant to that.

RYAN: My daughter Chloe is 27 years old, and she works for the BRA for the City of Boston, Boston Redevelopment Authority, and she's the manager of what they call the One in Three program. So 33% of the residents of Boston are between the ages of 22 and 34, so the mayor initiated this program, like 10 years ago. How does Boston attract, retain, and make this a wonderful place for them – that's the dream demographic for any city. It's second only to Austin, Texas.

So Chloe has this advisory council, it's like a dream team of people from all over the neighborhoods of Boston and different type of professions. They meet regularly and they each have projects, but it really underscores the youthfulness of Boston, and really the hope for the future of caring feeding for our young people so that our educated students, and many of you in this room, I heard this story over and over again, you came to college in Boston and then you stayed. So that really is her job to help foster that demographic.

WOLFE: We actually heard during the day today, especially in the last session, that among younger people a commitment to religious traditions is withering rather rapidly, and a second of religious self-identification. I just wonder in general, to anyone on the panel, perhaps you, in your position, might be the most relevant of what do we want to see for these young people? Do we understand that if they're turning against religion it's for good reasons that they found something there just doesn't appeal to their sense of authenticity? Or is it something we should lament because they will lack the spiritual depth that we old people have? I wonder how we think about – because Boston, you're absolutely right there, Boston is a young city and becoming younger and I'm sure that's really going to continue.

Any of you have any thoughts?

HEHIR: When I hear that story, and you put it together with the numbers I gave you before, the 17%, my feeling that the challenge for the Catholic church and this community is similar to what the European Catholic church faced in the latter half of the 19th century. In other words, if you can't find a way to talk to that community, to engage them, to reconnect with them, for whatever reason, we lose a generation. If we lose one generation, we lose two generations, and it's like losing the laboring class in Europe in the late 19th century. European Catholicism never recovered from it. This is a matter of some urgency about how to find a way to address that community in a way that it makes sense religiously and connects with their professional public political lives. If we don't do this, the future is defined for us, if we can't connect.

WOLFE: (inaudible) but one of the things we learned, those who study this thing in the academy is that there's a tradition, and again, I think mostly based more on the European experience for the younger generation of Muslims to be more religious, more conservative in their religion than their parents. I wonder if there's anything similar you can say about Boston.

REDA: I'm not sure that is true in our observation. I think we are, in Boston, in general – the Muslim community is a new community, mostly immigrant. There are some black Muslims in the mix, who are American, grew up in here, their parents were Muslims or they changed to Islam. But the problem with the Muslim community being an immigrant community, they come in here and we translate what we have learned. We translate the old religion and we expect that is going to continue in here. Although the religion itself is versatile and open to different interpretation in different things, that sticking to the things which does not resonate well with the American life, with the life of the young people, I think it's very much of a threat, similar to the Catholic church, that people will be leaving. And you see people who were, with their parents' directions, were religious and following the religion. They go – whether they get married into the faith or outside the faith, they are not interested at all in going back and continue the same ideas.

WOLFE: Anything to contribute on this point?

WALTON: Well, I don't know. I hear so much about this – the rise of the nuns and the like, and I'm sure this conversation may have taken place on earlier panels today. But I'm a little suspicious of these numbers. It plays well. It plays into this narrative of decline, that each generation is going to Hell in a handbasket.

WOLFE: We got the puritans to thank for that.

WALTON: Yeah, each generation. But what I see on the other hand – I see this as the other side of the diverse communities that young people are growing up in and their openness and willing to embrace different cultures and religious experiences, and even validate them in such a way, where they do not feel the need to patrol the borders of their own religious identity. So quite often it's not about I don't have a spiritual orientation. Nancy Ammerman, her latest book, she touches on this. It's not about that I don't have a religious orientation, but it's that I am not wedged to a particular religious orientation. I think that that is a big difference.

I think it bodes well for the study of religion in many ways, what many of us are trying to do in this classroom, because we know that religious literacy is cultural literacy, as you said. That's the role that we can play as educators. Because the more that we educate our students, whether they're in politics, whether they're in history, whether they're in sociology or religious studies, the more familiar and comfortable they with a diverse set of religious traditions and understanding them, the more equipped they are to be at home in the world. I think that it's pushing them in a direction that in some ways the millennials are already headed.

So once again, I don't mean to sound too Pollyannish every time I speak, but I do think that there is a real opportunity here.

WOLFE: Well, we're not against opportunity.

McDONOUGH: I'd like to follow up from a little bit of a different perspective, but also to add to your comments to a prior question about your experience with evangelical conservatives. There's also diversity among generations that I see playing out in the workforce every day, whether it be a school building, whether it be in our administrative offices, there are different things that have brought

us to where we find ourselves. Somebody like me, who grew up in an economy where whatever motivates you to go through your career, you attach yourself to an organization. It is not the same with the workforce today.

By and large the younger generation – we have to think about this in figuring out how do we recruit and retain the most excellent teachers to put in our classrooms? The one thing that Boston has going for it are the students that we serve. We are more likely to be successful in recruitment and retention of our workforce because the motivation of a new generation of people coming into education is to make a difference to a higher, nobler goal in whatever range of careers may present themselves. It's not to the organization, it is to the goodness. It is to a common goodness – their definition of a common goodness. And I think that is another sign of hopefulness within our city and within those people who are just beginning to enter the workforce and think purposefully about their meaning of life in context with what their contribution is and not what their attachment is.

WOLFE:

Well, in my line of work, if you get two optimistic comments in a row, you bring the discussion to a close. So let me thank you all very, very much. When Erik and I put this together, we had hoped that today we'd bring together some prominent academics, and we got just really the cream of the crop of American academia on this subject, but that the evening session would be more practical and dealing with people with more hands-on experience, and especially in the city which has just had, as we said, a new mayor elected, a city that attracts so many young people, as Amy reminded us, a city that bears so little resemblance to the much more ghettoized – and I use that term religiously as well as racially – city it was in the past. It is an astonishing future that Boston will face, that this country will face. It's a very, very different country, it's a very different city. Thank you all so much for really concluding our great day, I think, with a terrific final panel.

END OF PANEL