Religion's Investment and Involvement in Community-Based Economic Development: An Overview

Elliot Wright

The role of religion in promoting the social and economic welfare of communities and their people is timeless, ancient and contemporary, and richly complex in form and motivation.

Concern for the physical and material well-being of the circle of faith promotes a sense of "we" and commitment to the prosperity of those who share common beliefs. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the travails of Moses as he sought to care for the needs of wandering Hebrews demonstrate the point, as does the communitarian experiment of the earliest Christian church in Jerusalem. It also could be found among religious groups on the American frontier in the 18th and 19th centuries. Churches took the edge off the hard life and "actively shaped the use of growing wealth and labor resources to promote educational and voluntary aid to those in need…Ordained and lay leaders promoted the spiritual and material prosperity of their flocks through productive households, strong businesses, and useful education" (Clay and Wright 2000, 207). Many of these congregations were mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic, but the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon)—strongly influenced by frontier realities—established and continues a strong emphasis on social services and the building of economic capacity within the body of faith.[1]

Other examples of economic activism in the American context include the community organizing prompted by the Black Church after the Civil War; the strong appeal of credit unions among immigrant Roman Catholics 100 years ago; the mutual benefit societies, many of which became insurance companies, among immigrant Jews, Catholics, and Lutherans; and to some degree, the freed slaves and the businesses set up by Elijah Muhammad in the initial expression of the Nation of Islam in the early 20th century (Lincoln 1961).

Concern for "outsiders" in need often parallels concern for the physical and material welfare of a faith constituency. The Hebrew Scriptures again attest to such concern, as does the literature of the early Christian movement, such as the thoughts of St. Cyprian of Carthage. Bishop Cyprian found it altogether appropriate that an often-

shunned minority religious community, his people, should attend to "pagan" neighbors suffering from plague (Butler 1963). Why? Because the "pagans" needed aid. Some of the motivation for service in any context may be to win others to a particular religious point of view, but that is not the whole story. Many religions have a strong humanitarian impulse, a kind of universalized "Golden Rule" of behavior. Nonevangelistic religious outreach unquestionably occurs in the United States, notably in the area of social services and community revitalization. The vast systems of hospitals, facilities for neglected children, homes for the aged, community centers, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens emerged in large part from religious sentiments and generally served persons without reference to religious affiliation—even before many of the institutions received government funding. The same broad humanitarian outlook is also evident in more recent religion-related, or faith-based, community-based organizations, including community development corporations (CDCs).

The investment and involvement of religion in community-based economic development represent a combination of commitment to specific circles of faith and to persons beyond those circles. Some faith-based community development targets particular religious, ethnic, or racial groups; others are totally nonsectarian and ethnically inclusive. This appropriate combination reflects a pluralistic society because "pluralism" by definition recognizes particularities within the social whole. The implications for funding, notably with regard to the expenditure of public money through religious entities, are both volatile and relevant.

How extensive is the religious or faith-based role in community social and economic development in 2003? Answering that question proves nearly impossible. Regarding CDCs (only one form of organization), even quantitative data are in short supply. Five-year-old figures from the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED), which was founded in 1970 and grew to become a "trade association" for community development, indicate that of some 4,500 CDCs, 14 percent are faith based, a percentage based on projections from a mail-return questionnaire. This projection appears to be on the low side. In May 2003, while preparing for another survey or census of the field, NCCED produced a list of more than 750 community-based, faith-based organizations engaged in one or more of four community-based improvement activities: providing affordable housing, developing commercial space and business enterprises, offering job training and placement, and establishing community-based financial institutions.

This paper reviews American faith-based community economic development for what the heritage discloses about the potentials and limitations of this component of the community-based development enterprise. The narrative incorporates, but is

not limited to, CDCs. "Faith-based" and "religion" are used more or less interchangeably for the sake of convenience. To date, "faith-based," a fairly new term, has not entered into legislation or judicial parlance but makes an attractive option for the discussion at hand.

FAITH AND THE ROOTS OF COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

As is widely acknowledged, the civil rights activism of the late 1950s and early 1960s anticipated the contemporary community-based development movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other leaders of that struggle asked poignant questions about the value of voting rights, racially integrated public schools, and open access to buses if African Americans lacked economic opportunity, decent housing, medical services, and safe neighborhoods. Black Church leaders served in the vanguard in setting up CDCs—community-based, community-controlled entities of empowerment (Thomas and Blake 1996; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Billingsley 1999). Other religious streams, such as the following, fed into community development:

- The cooperative movement, a primarily rural phenomenon that continued, in fragmented ways, the spirit of frontier congregations committed to spiritual and material prosperity.
- The heritage of utopian or "socialistic" communities, such as Oneida and Amana, that blended religious and economic motivations, though none lasted long.
- The Protestant "social gospel" that taught a sense of religious responsibility to address social, political, and economic ills in the name of justice.
- Immigrant religious groups, often shut out of the economic mainstream, that launched self-help institutions such as credit unions, benevolent "brotherhoods," and cooperatives.

Catholic social teaching in the 20th century made increasingly strong links between economic empowerment and justice. This theme moves from "Rerum Novarum," an encyclical by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, through "Economic Justice for All," the 1986 pastoral letter by the U.S. Catholic bishops. Fifteen years before the pastoral letter, the U.S. Catholic Church established the Campaign for Human Development, which has channeled millions of dollars into community organizing and development, usually without reference to the sectarian affiliation of recipient organizations (Jennings 1966).

The importance of the Black Church in the story of community development is directly proportional to the economic oppression of African Americans both before and after Emancipation. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya summarize the role of the church in strides toward economic empowerment in *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990). Congregations became seedbeds for organizing mutual aid societies, banks, businesses, schools, and medical facilities. Efforts to build capital were most active, according to these authors, after the failure in 1874 of Freedman's Savings and Trust Company. The company had been chartered 9 years earlier by the U.S. Congress to hold the bonuses paid to Black soldiers in the Union army, the savings of African Americans, and the funds of churches and philanthropic societies (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). Congregations and coalitions of congregations started businesses. One Baltimore shipyard, financed by a church, built small cargo ships for 20 years before it closed in the economic crash of the 1890s (Clay and Wright 2000).

Long before CDCs appeared, the Black struggle for justice and civil rights had an economic-empowerment agenda. The National Urban League, organized in 1911, fostered jobs and better working conditions for African Americans. The union organizing of A. Phillip Randolph fed directly into the post–World War II civil rights efforts, as did the expanded economic expectations of returning Black veterans. Before CDCs were common, the Reverend Leon Sullivan, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia, and other pastors created the Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC), which has become an international network of job training and business development (Sullivan 1998).

"The need for job training and retraining in minority communities in the '60s was immense," Sullivan wrote in his autobiography, *Moving Mountains: The Principles and Purposes of Leon Sullivan* (1998). "Thousands upon thousands were out of work; many of them were out of hope" (Sullivan 1998, 15).

REACHING FOR HOPE

"Hope" is often used to describe the importance of community-based organizations. No doubt an appeal to hope prompted African-American pastors and lay leaders to champion CDCs in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn and the Hough neighborhood of Cleveland, two sites of early community development corporations. Most of the first CDCs emerged with the support of the federal War on Poverty and its Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), but the concept of community-based, community-controlled organizations essential to the model was a form of American

voluntarism rather than a government product. William W. Biddle, a keen social analyst of the mid-20th century American culture, hoped he was seeing the "rediscovery" of local initiative, which he considered essential in economic empowerment. Biddle, a deeply religious sociologist affiliated with the National Council of Churches, urged congregations to join the community development movement as part of the community reality (Biddle and Biddle 1965).

Biddle advised congregations not to drag their sectarian concerns into the community development process, and this commonsense point of view generally has prevailed, perhaps because CDCs from the start had access to public funds. This access made them significantly different from the faith-motivated social service agencies begun years before with private money—institutions such as hospitals and other care facilities totally private in origin although they today depend heavily on government dollars. Also, religious institutions organized relatively few early CDCs directly. More typically, churches or parishes supported community-based development entities established as freestanding, not-for-profit corporations. Firm community bases were even the hallmarks of early faith-based CDCs, such as the New Community Corporation of Newark, New Jersey, and the St. Nicholas CDC of Brooklyn. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the day of the congregation-initiated or ecumenically sponsored CDC still lay in the future, but patterns were taking shape. One of the oldest faith-based CDCs, the Mooresville (New Jersey) Ecumenical Neighborhood Development, took root in 1969 and still is going strong. Another early one, begun in 1973 as Advocates of Black Community Development (ABCD) in Canton, Ohio, began work as a separate corporation developed by a small United Methodist congregation. ABCD changed its name in 1987 to Association for Better Community Development and continues today as a powerful faith-based model working to "reduce poverty, to foster self-reliance and to bring about empowerment of the community that we serve."

An assortment of religious organizations—congregations, judicatories, and national groups—took advantage of funds available from War on Poverty sources for senior and other low-income housing. Some projects, often completed in collaboration with private builders, required the religious entities to do little more than set up holding companies. "Interfaith housing" organizations became common features on the affordable housing landscape. The degree to which interfaith housing organizations fit into the faith-based community development story is debatable. Some originally were conscious attempts at religious collaboration, while others may have represented efforts to keep religion out of the picture, with "interfaith" essentially meaning "secular."

FAITH AS FUNDER

Organized religion and faith-motivated individuals have injected billions of dollars into social services and community improvement projects over the course of U.S. history. A survey of NCCED publications indicates that the community development movement expected religion to become a major funder of its projects. The record rises and falls in peaks and valleys. Roman Catholic national and specialized organizations are by far the most consistent in maintaining programs of grants and loans. More than 32 years old, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development raises some $10 million each year for community-based organizing and development. Catholic religious orders invest heavily in community development ventures. One women's order, the Sisters of Charity, created the McAuley Institute, a major housing intermediary and technical assistance provider, and Mercy Housing, which operates in the western states.

Several mainline Protestant community development funds of the late 1960s and 1970s either failed to gain momentum or folded after a short time. Only one major religious pension fund, that of the United Methodist Church, sustains a program of community development loans, primarily affordable-housing investments through established national and regional intermediaries. Also, the Presbyterian Foundation made both grants and loans for community development over the years, and since 1980 several Episcopal dioceses have established revolving loan funds of considerable importance. Furthermore, Protestant and Roman Catholic organizations invest major amounts in state or regional community development loan funds, such as in New Hampshire, New Jersey, Florida, and New Mexico.

Despite limited data, it is clear that religion's greatest financial support for community development has come on local levels, primarily by providing startup and operational costs for community- and faith-based organizations. In one grant program of the early 1990s, funded and monitored by the Lilly Endowment, 28 projects raised $4.3 million from local religious institutions and $700,000 from national and regional religious contributors.

The endowment's $5 million investment in the total program leveraged $70 million from government, philanthropic, and religious sources (Wright 1996).

FAITH-BASED GROWTH IN THE 1980S

The field of what is now called "faith-based community development" went through a relatively quiet period in the 1970s. CDCs themselves struggled to find their footing. The decade of the 1980s would be quite different. The Reagan administration scaled back federal support for CDCs and restructured the federal programs benefiting community-based organizations. This challenge prompted a search for new sources of funding and legitimization. Private foundations stepped forward to replace some of the lost government funds; previously, the Ford Foundation had been the major philanthropic supporter of CDCs. Religion did not fill the coffers, but it was on the brink of becoming a strong advocate and itself an arena of significant expansion.

CDCs with specific congregational or religious linkages, sometimes ecumenical or interfaith, increased. Bethel New Life, one of the most celebrated faith-based CDCs, emerged from a Lutheran church on Chicago's West Side in 1979. Many large African-American churches had, or were on the way toward having, CDC affiliates: Concord Baptist in Brooklyn, Wheat Street Baptist in Atlanta, Allen AME in Queens, Allen Temple Baptist in Oakland, and Antioch Baptist in Chicago to name a few. Not all CDCs were formed by African-American churches or in large cities. La Casa of Goshen, Indiana, grew out of a migrant ministry to Hispanic workers and attracted 24 congregational sponsors. Wesley Housing (United Methodist) and Catholics for Housing both emerged to serve racially mixed areas across the Potomac from Washington, D.C. Interfaith housing organizations proliferated across the country in the 1980s.

Several significant collaborative efforts in housing and other forms of community development grew out of community-based organizing initiatives. A notable example, formed in 1986, can be found in Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI), which today has 90 sponsoring congregations—Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. The HCCI approach supports comprehensive community building, ranging from social services to housing and business development. South Bronx Churches and East Brooklyn Congregations exemplify organizations that went from community-based political organizing into community-based housing and economic development. The short-term federal Nehemiah Housing Program, authorized by Congress in 1986, took its model from East Brooklyn Congregations, a Protestant-Catholic coalition that built 500 affordable housing units using donated city land and state and private funding.

Religion-related initiatives in providing both permanent and emergency housing in Washington, D.C., were promoted and chronicled by the Churches Conference on Shelter and Housing. In the early 1990s, this organization, which no longer exists, published three instructive booklets on religious sponsorship of affordable housing. *Building on Faith*, a collection of case studies, remains a landmark in the literature of faith-based housing.

GROWING VISIBILITY

Corrective Capitalism: The Rise of America's Community Development Corporations, published in 1987 by the Ford Foundation, duly accounted for the role of religion in funding and organizing community-based entities. This first history of CDCs, written by Neal R. Peirce and Carol F. Steinbach, clearly understood the religious precedents and energy that fed into the community development movement. Ford had firsthand experience through a partnership with the Congress of National Black Churches. The grant program supported church-based social justice programs, including community-based economic development.

The next year, Seedco, an intermediary organization, conducted the first study of the extent and capacity of religion in community economic development for the Lilly Endowment. The Council on Foundations published the report, with supplementary material, in 1988. No mere collection of case studies, *Religious Institutions as Actors in Community-Based Economic Development* evaluated how religious institutions were, and could be, involved in community-based economic improvement. The report mentions dozens of examples and cites a range of religious roles along a spectrum from advocate to actual developer. It lists types of religious institutions engaged in various forms of community-based economic development.

The Seedco document hardly became a bestseller, but it had serious, long-lasting impact within the worlds of community development and religion. It showed that religious initiative in community-based development already was substantial and growing, and that religious institutions could succeed with every form of community-based development. The report helped prepare the way for a large Lilly Endowment grants program called Religious Institutions as Partners in Community-Based Development. The call for proposals in 1989 generated so many responses that the Endowment enlarged its pool of dollars and the Ford Foundation supplied additional funds. Eventually, 28 projects received grants for planning, implementation, and followup. Most projects developed affordable housing. The program encouraged religious collaboration with existing CDCs, a

major goal, but it also led to the formation of new faith-based organizations that would become major players in their communities. Such organizations include the East Austin CDC in Austin, Texas, and Community Developers of Beauford-Hyde in Belhaven, North Carolina.

The work of the Ford Foundation and Lilly Endowment in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought heightened visibility to faith-based development in both secular and religious arenas. Another momentum also was gathering, especially within Evangelical Protestantism—a partnership between the Pew Charitable Trusts and World Vision, which fosters housing ministries. In 1989, the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) came into existence through the example and theology of Dr. John Perkins, a community development pioneer in Mendenhall, Mississippi, and Pasadena, California. The formation of "Christian community"—the circle of faith perspective—runs strong in CCDA, but the Perkins outlook also reaches beyond itself in voluntary service.

Religion-related, community-based organizations large and small continued to emerge: the Abyssinian Development Corporation, related to the large Baptist church in New York City; Fame Renaissance, a product of the First African Methodist Church of Los Angeles; the Metropolitan Housing and Community Development Corporation of Washington, North Carolina, the outgrowth of a small African Methodist Episcopal Zion congregation; Pueblo Nuevo, born of a tiny Episcopal mission in Los Angeles; Nueva Esperanza, the community-building arm of Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia, a coalition of Protestant pastors; and Rocky Mount/Edgecombe CDC in North Carolina, whose faith roots reside in committed individuals rather than in an institution. The Episcopal Church and the Communities of Shalom program of the United Methodist Church announced community-based economic development as priorities. Within the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the large African-American Pentecostal denomination, housing and economic programs expanded, with two examples being the West Los Angeles CDC, affiliated with a large West Los Angeles COGIC congregation, and Trinity Village Non-Profit Housing Corporation, a product of the Holy Trinity Church in Muskegon Heights, Michigan. First active in jobs and business development and later in housing, the Greyston Foundation of Yonkers, New York, became a prominent community development engine with Zen Buddhist roots. Muslim initiatives increased, as exemplified by the Malcolm Shabazz Development Corporation in New York, an affiliate of the Muslim American Society, and "Your Community," an extensive Kansas City, Kansas, neighborhood revitalization brought about by the small United Nation of Islam.

TRAINING AND SERVICES

By the early 1990s a clear need existed for training and educational resources that respected religious service motives and linked them to the community-based development industry. The NCCED, with its long track record of engagement with faith- and community-based organizations, was among those responding to this need. With the backing of the Ford Foundation and the Lilly Endowment, NCCED set up the African-American Church Project to recruit and equip African-American congregations for community-based housing and business development. In 1995, the Ford-funded African-American Religious Institutions Program was established, with emphases on education, credit unions, and relationships with intermediaries. Subsequent Lilly and Ford grants led in 1997 to the permanent NCCED Faith-based Community Economic Development Initiative, incorporating a Faith-based Academy. Religious organizations flooded NCCED with requests for information and training. The response of NCCED included newsletters, other publications, websites, training modules, and efforts to help other organizations and schools to respond to local faith-based opportunities. In 1999 the Faith-based Academy produced *An Annotated Bibliography for Faith-based Community Economic Development*.

During the last three years of the 1990s, the following additional educational venues emerged:

- New Hampshire College (now Southern New Hampshire University), which has the country's oldest accredited community economic development program, added a faith-based track to its master's-level curriculum.
- The Harvard Divinity School in 1998 began an annual Summer Leadership Institute, with a focus on church-led community development in the African-American community.
- Eastern College, St. David's, Pennsylvania, geared up its master's program in community development to respond to domestic demands as well as the international arena, which had been its field of concentration.
- The University of Delaware included a faith-based component in its community-based development certificate program.
- The Faith Center for Community and Economic Development, a training facility in New York City, emerged and attracted the support of major financial institutions.

- The Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago built economic development into its biennial urban ministry congresses and started a master's degree program in the field in collaboration with North Park University.
- The Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, the source of the basic training material for community development, added a faith-based component.
- Several individual seminaries increased their curricular offerings in community economic development.
- The College of Biblical Studies, a Houston, Texas Bible college, launched a sustained community development program with the help of NCCED.
- Seminars and workshop on faith-based development became features on the religious landscape across the country.

In 1998 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established HUD's Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships, an important government innovation. For the first time a federal office exists with a specific mandate to promote collaboration between government and religion in the arena of economic empowerment. (Before that time HUD had staff liaisons to religious communities.) A central activity of the Center was the convening of regional and local conferences to explain HUD programs open to religious providers.

Federal welfare policy became a driving force in faith-based, community-based development after 1996. The reform legislation of that year put the emphasis on work first, benefits second if at all. Welfare reform challenged community development across the board to devote more attention to workforce issues. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 also introduced the concept of "charitable choice," which in effect invited religious organizations to compete for publicly funded job training, placement contracts, and grants and prohibited states from putting obstacles in their way.

Welfare reform elicited significant response from the religious sector. In 1999 an NCCED scan of the field for the Annie E. Casey Foundation found four types of faith-based organizations either increasing or starting workforce programs in the wake of welfare reform: congregations, coalitions of congregations, social service networks or single agencies, and CDCs. In many cases, the congregations or coalitions had established separate corporate structures to handle the jobs programs. Most connectional denominations strongly recommend such separate incorporation for

liability reasons. The scan also found a fifth, new type of organization—one that specifically addresses workforce issues in partnership with government entities, usually county or city social service departments. Some of these organizations, such as a network of Faith Pathfinders programs in Texas, responded to government overtures; others, such as Families First of North Carolina, built on religious and community initiatives (Wright 1999). The NCCED scan also found considerable displeasure among religious institutions with the implementation of welfare reform and considerable religious naiveté on such matters as performance-based contracts and government reporting procedures. "Charitable choice" surfaced rarely in telephone conversations with directors or staff of approximately 75 faith-based workforce programs.

THE BUSH INITIATIVES

The full implications of "charitable choice" and the ongoing public debate on its merits did not unfold until January 2001, when the George W. Bush administration announced the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. A major objective of the effort is to "level the playing field" regarding religious access to federal social service and community development funds. While controversial, this initiative has accomplished much in dramatizing the capacity of faith-based providers in charitable activities and economic empowerment programs. It has provided channels of information through five (later seven) faith-based and community centers within federal agencies. It encourages new players and alerts segments of the religious sector to opportunities already open to its agencies and institutions. At the same time, the initiatives evoke extensive false expectations about the pending largess of the federal government to religion. Undoubtedly inaccurate press accounts asserting that the administration was doing the unprecedented in "finding ways to channel public money" to religious service entities played a part. Such misunderstandings made it temporarily more difficult to convey through training that community-based economic development is relentlessly hard work—whatever its base.

The Bush program's eventual stress on training and technical assistance for capacity building received essentially positive response among community-based religious practitioners. Veteran developers, however, faith-based and otherwise, have wondered about the capacity of that field to absorb large numbers of new community-based organizations given the scarcity of operating funds. The thought of a CDC or similar organization at every congregation is frightening, almost an affront to the very notion of community-based development. Collaboration, not fragmenta-

tion, is a necessity in both program implementation and training. (Collaboration is likely more promoted than practiced, yet excellent models exist that can be used to help faith groups avoid costly duplications of service within their communities. One such model, the interfaith Michigan Neighborhood Partnership in Detroit, facilitates collaboration among religious organizations, businesses, financial institutions, government, and ethnic groups.)

The assertion that "faith does it better," implicit in some aspects of the Bush initiatives, does not play well on the community economic development stage. Religious actors have taken part in the movement since its inception almost 40 years ago. They do good work; they are valued. General, or secular, organizations do good work; they are valued. No inclination in community development circles pits the sacred against the secular or vice versa in housing production, business development, job training, or the formation of community-based financial institutions.

"Charitable choice" asserts that religious providers of public services should be allowed to hire their own religious kinds while being prohibited from discrimination on religious grounds in the delivery of services. This premise represents a dilemma for faith-based, community-based economic development, part of an industry that has promoted nondiscrimination in services and operations. While concerned about their own constituencies, faith-based CDCs and similar organizations generally have taken a stand for open hiring based on merit and professional qualifications. This spirit is reflected, although not directed explicitly at hiring, in the NCCED Policy on Faith-based and Community Development and Related Issues. The policy states: "Respectful of faith, NCCED remains faith neutral, as must government, as it collaborates with persons and groups of all faiths, races, ethnicities and national origins in promoting the general welfare of all citizens" (NCCED 2001).

LEADERSHIP

It would be wrong to assume that clergy form the leadership of most faith-based community organizations. Many pastors have triggered and led both faith-based and general CDCs, but the faith field is not a clerical preserve. Laity have initiated and operated dozens upon dozens of faith-based, community-based development organizations. Within the Black Church, the approval of the pastor remains essential. Some pastors do run the organizations personally, but just as many examples can be cited in which laypersons are the true leaders. The case for lay leaders is particularly evident when the faith-based originator is a religious coalition or a communi-

ty center or other form of noncongregational organization. Women, it should be noted, are powerful forces in faith-based community development.

By the late 1980s and through the 1990s, concern about professional standards characterized the whole of the community-based development industry—secular and faith-based. The first generation of CDC directors, who had learned on the job, began retiring. New organizations emerged. Educational credentials took on increasing importance: "Faith is good, but can she do a deal?"

The changing professional scene, including new educational venues, community and career stories, and job opportunities, is illustrated in *A Guide to Careers in Community Development* (Brophy and Shabecoff 2001). The guide grew out of a human capital development program funded by the National Community Development Initiative and managed by NCCED. Another visible but essentially undocumented leadership trend is the leadership of large Black Church-initiated CDCs—namely, the increasing number of men and women who left careers in banking, business, law, and the military to devote themselves to community improvement.

STUDYING FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The notorious difficulty of studying community-based organizations extends to those that also are faith-based. Because they are community-based, and communities differ, categories of performance or measures of success are hard to draw. Moderate "success" in one community may be exceptional success in another and marginal success in a third. Definitional problems abound. How is "community" determined—by geography or common interest? What is "community development"—a set of activities or an attitude? How far will the term stretch across the spectrum of social service and economic empowerment challenges?

Faith-based community organizations often appear to be more willing than secular counterparts to combine social services and economic empowerment programs. Is this an accurate perception, and if so, does it have relevance in the achievement of healthier communities?

Are all faiths equal in their contributions, or potential contributions, to community-based development? Which particular faiths—given some correlation to religious traditions—are more effective in community improvement than others? What are the public-policy implications if research were to indicate that Presbyterian-tinged community organizations are better at job training than Pentecostal-influenced pro-

grams, or that Buddhist-related housing development organizations build houses more efficiently than Baptist-founded organizations? To what standards should all faith-based community organizations be held?

What value will come of the extensive, if fragmented, research on faith-based community entities already under way—a veritable growth industry? What are the underlying objectives, potential policy uses, and political motivations? What are the benefits, if any, of putting welfare mothers to work in livable-wage jobs? Of offering affordable housing? Of making neighborhoods safe? Of helping ex-offenders become positive citizens in healthy communities?

Although empirical data about the benefits are elusive, this much is certain: community-based organizations, general and faith-based, are pulsating, changeable, often unpredictable entities. Static data on their capacity, product, and potential will be just that: static and relatively worthless. Meaningful research and evaluation going forward should be as dynamic and useful as the subjects themselves.

NOTES

[1] For a comprehensive survey of Mormon social welfare history and policy, see Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *Mormons' War on Poverty: A History of LDS Welfare, 1830–1900* (Provo: University of Utah Press, 1993); the system in effect today, dating from the Great Depression, is described by Glen L. Rudd, *Pure Religion: The Story of Church Welfare Since 1930* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995).

REFERENCES

Biddle, William W., and Loureide J. Biddle. 1965. *The Community Development Process: The Rediscovery of Local Initiative*. Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Billingsley, Andrew. 1999. *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brophy, Paul C., and Alice Shabecoff. 2001. *A Guide to Careers in Community Development*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Butler, Alan. 1963. *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. Vol. 3, edited by Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater. Notre Dame, IN: Thomas More Publishing.

Clay, Eric, and Elliot Wright. 2000. Community-Based Economic Development. In *Serving Those in Need: A Handbook for Managing Faith-Based Human Services Organizations*, edited by Edward L. Queen II. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jennings, James R., ed. 1966. *Empowerment and Hope: 25 Years of Turning Lives Around*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

Lincoln, Charles Eric. 1961. *Black Muslims in America*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Lincoln, Charles Eric, and Lawrence H. Mamiya. 1990. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED). 2001. NCCED Policy on Faith-Based and Community Development and Related Issues. http://www.ncced.org/fbi/policyPlatform.pdf.

Sullivan, Leon H. 1998. *Moving Mountains: The Principles and Purposes of Leon Sullivan*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.

Thomas, June Manning, and Reynard N. Blake Jr. 1996. Faith-Based Community Development and African-American Neighborhoods. In *Revitalizing Urban Neighborhoods*, edited by W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and Philip Star. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Wright, Elliot. 1996. Partnerships Spark Revitalized Neighborhoods. In *Progressions: A Lilly Endowment Occasional Report*. Indianapolis: Lilly Endowment Inc.

Wright, Elliot, ed. 1999. *Faith-Based Workforce Development: Programs of Promise and Their Challenges*. Washington, DC: National Congress for Community Economic Development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elliot Wright is affiliated with the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED) and the United Methodist Church.