

OP-ED

"The struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." - Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980)

To remember is to resist

Bereft of both sound arguments and a moral compass to justify its position regarding the future of the Our Lady of the Presentation School building, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston can only hope that the Allston-Brighton community suffers from collective amnesia. For it knows that memories of its arrogance, indifference and callousness toward this community will sustain opposition to the relocation of the Metropolitan Tribunal, the Archdiocesan ecclesiastical court, to the Presentation School building.

The RCAB hopes for collective amnesia on a broad and deep scale.

It hopes that we have forgotten the breadth of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, a scandal of tragic proportions both in the Archdiocese as a whole and in Allston-Brighton in particular. It hopes that we have forgotten that this scandal continued over decades because of a sustained cover-up conducted by those holding power in the Archdiocese, including Cardinal Law. The RCAB hopes that we forget that the extensive number of parish and school closings is directly tied to its failure to protect the young from pedophile priests.

From the RCAB's perspective, it would be best if we possessed no memory of the generations of Roman Catholics who sustained Our Lady of the Presentation School for more than eight decades. We should, of course, forget the dedication of the school's teachers and staff. Likewise, we should strike from our memory the lengthy struggle conducted by current parents of children at the school. To remember their efforts on behalf of their children and this community - the construction of a playground, the annual fundraisers that supported the school, and their mobilization to secure a new school at the site - is to be outraged by the arrogance and insensitivity of the Archdiocese's leadership.

The RCAB hopes that we have forgotten the immorality of its decision to announce the closing of Our Lady of the Presentation School in May 2004, a decision that confronted parents with few choices and little

time to locate appropriate schools for their children. The Archdiocese would prefer that we not remember that a collective mobilization of parents of children at OLP, neighborhood residents, and elected officials ensured that OLP would remain open for another year. This is a particular experience

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mained of the proposal to establish the Oak Square Campus for Youth and Families. To retain a memory of the pro-

The Archdiocese wants no recollection of the fact that it is entirely possible for it to locate its ecclesiastical court to another location, therefore allowing the estab-

lishment of the Oak Square Campus for Youth and Families. Archbishop O'Malley and Bishop Lennon hope that we

activity, and insularity. I have every confidence that this community will decline this invitation.

We remember the bonds of community forged and maintained through sustained protest against an injustice committed by the Archdiocese against this community. We remember the protest rallies in the bitter cold of January and February. We remember the many community groups and organizations that rallied to support the Presentation School Foundation's proposal. We remember our elected officials, including Mayor Menino and Secretary of State Galvin, who embraced the foundation's plan. And, we remember that the RCAB needs a zoning variance to re-locate its ecclesiastical court to the Presentation School building.

To remember is to resist. To remember is to say no to an Archdiocese that has recklessly disregarded the needs and wishes of this community. To remember is to sustain this community's struggle to realize the Presentation School Foundation's vision for a future use of the school building that is entirely consistent with OLP's rich past. To remember is to sustain the good fight that this community has waged for a full year.

The struggle endures. It unites the Presentation School Foundation with the parents of OLP students, neighborhood residents, community organizations and elected officials.

I ask you to sustain this struggle by attending a protest rally on June 10 at the Oak Square Common at 4:30 p.m. On that day, the leadership of the Archdiocese will close Our Lady of the Presentation School. On that day, they hope that our struggle to create the Oak Square Campus for Youth and Families will cease. They hope for collective amnesia. However, we have our memories of injustices committed by the RCAB and how this community has protested against those injustices. And those memories will sustain us as we join together once again to reject their scheme and to affirm our vision for the future of the Presentation School building. To remember is to resist.



Moira McCrave-Carragee, 12, Caitlin Fitzgibbon, 11, and Samantha Prince, 12, all students at Our Lady of the Presentation in Brighton's Oak Square section, shielded their flames from the chilly wind during a protest in January. Concerned parents and community leaders all gathered at the school to protest a decision by Archdiocese officials that rejects a bid to purchase the school and assume its operations.

Photo: John Nihen

that the Archdiocese wants us to forget because it serves as an example of how people fighting an injustice can indeed prevail given their collective efforts.

The RCAB would prefer that we have no memory of a creative and innovative proposal developed by the Presentation School Foundation for the future of the Presentation School building. To remember the proposal is to remember the benefits that would flow from it: the establishment of a pre-school, an independent grammar school, YMCA after-school and summer programs, and adult education services. This plan responds to pressing problems in Allston-Brighton, including increasing poverty, the loss of families and the lengthy waiting lists for adult education programs. Because of this, the leadership of the Archdiocese would be well served if no memory at all re-

posal produces a sense of moral outrage that the RCAB rejected this plan in January 2005.

To forget the Presentation School Foundation's proposal is to lose the ability to compare this plan with the RCAB's scheme for the use of the Presentation School building. The foundation's plan would serve the needs of working parents, children, immigrants and poor. The Archdiocese's scheme would serve the narrow interests of canon lawyers, couples seeking marriage annulments and those who investigate Archdiocesan "penal matters." Amnesia serves the interests of the Archdiocese well here because any memory of these strikingly different definitions of the future of the Presentation school building leads inevitably to a collective rejection of the impoverished character of the RCAB's scheme.

no longer remember that the RCAB needs zoning relief to move its Metropolitan Tribunal to Oak Square.

From the perspective of the RCAB's leadership, we should erase all our memories concerning the broken vows that characterize its relationship to this community. They promised transparency, openness and dialogue. They delivered insensitivity and insularity. They remained deaf to community protests against the relocation of the Metropolitan Tribunal to the school site. They spurned dialogue, with Archbishop O'Malley refusing repeated requests for a meeting with the Presentation School Foundation. With this trail of broken promises, amnesia remains the only hope. To remember these injustices sparks action.

The RCAB invites us to set aside our memories of its arrogance, immorality, insensi-