

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Margarita A. Mooney, *Faith Makes Us Live: Surviving and Thriving in the Haitian Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, 302 pp. \$US 21.95 paper (978-0-520-26036-8), \$US 55.00 hardcover (978-0-520-26034-4)

F*Faith Makes Us Live* is the result of an ambitious, multisite ethnography of the Haitian Diaspora in Miami, Paris and Montreal. The author, whose Ph.D. dissertation led to this book, spoke with 150 Haitian expatriates in those three cities. The result is an original, richly detailed study of one of the world's great diasporas, and one that makes a clear, well-supported argument about the role of ethnic and mainstream religious institutions in the lives and adaptation of immigrants in three very different social settings.

The book's core argument is that only in Miami has the Catholic Church played a central role in the integration of Haitian immigrants. Mediating institutions that serve Haitians work on the basis of cooperation in Miami, competition in Montreal, and are simply invisible in Paris. As a result, the author argues, Haitians are more likely to succeed in Florida than in the other diasporic sites she studies. Expatriate Haitians also tend to feel alienated from the mainstream and public institutions in France and in Canada, and do not have the powerful ethnoreligious structures available to their Miami counterparts. Mooney's most important, novel conceptual contribution is her focus on the Catholic church as the "mediating institution" that seems to have served Haitians the best. This is therefore a welcome addition to the already rich literature on immigrant institutions and organizations, and one that makes a rare, thoroughly documented comparative argument.

The book also makes a number of valuable points relevant to students of migration and immigrant integration in Canada. For instance, Mooney is critical of Quebec's policy decision to fund primarily multi-ethnic, secular organizations to assist immigrants, when many immigrants rely intensively on intra-ethnic networks that are often religious. Yet the book often seems biased in favour of Catholic organizations and quick to dismiss or at least ignore their potential problems (of which the current spate of scandals is only one). It has been widely known that religion is a very common lifeline for immigrants (particularly refugees, illegals, and others who face difficult situations), but organized religion has almost

as often been a crutch or worse. A broader, more critical perspective on the sometimes ambiguous role of religion and spirituality in the lives of immigrants and members of minority groups would have been welcome. Conversely, the role of other mediating institutions is only partially covered. Montreal is known for example for the rich intellectual, literary and cultural life of the Haitian community, often tied to public and state institutions. A more careful analysis of these other mediating institutions would have provided a more complete picture.

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