**Transcription of Interview with Carrie and John Schuchardt**

**Interview by Jillian Price and Olivia Taggart**

**November 18, 2013**

**10:00 AM**

**House of Peace**

**Ipswich, Massachusetts**

**Transcript prepared by Jillian Price**

*Notes:*

*Carrie and John Schuchardt run the House of Peace in Ipswich, MA, where they provide a home and social services for refugee children and children injured during current wars. Several days before this interview, Carrie Schuchardt met with several of the now-adult Haitian refugees to whom she was a foster mother. These refugees did not wish to be personally interviewed, but agreed that Carrie could relay their stories as long as their names and other personal information was not revealed. Names accidentally given in this interview have been edited out.*

*When we arrived, Carrie requested that the interview be recorded on audio only, and that she be interviewed with her husband John. The setting was very relaxed (Carrie gave us tea and muffins). Carrie had prepared well for the interview, and during the course of the recording described several newspaper article and sources for us. These have been cited in footnotes in the transcript.*

*As Olivia and I were leaving after the interview, Carrie, talking about her work with all refugees, said, ‘I think if everyone could spend one night holding onto a child who is shaking, it would change their opinion of war.’ We did not capture this on audio, and so the quote may be somewhat inexact, but we thought that it was important and should be included in this transcript.*

**Carrie Schuchardt:** [I think we should start with]… what is the House of Peace, and the framework for the arrival of refugees from Haiti and Cuba. But we’re focusing today on Haiti, ok?  
   
**Jillian:** Right, yes.

**Carrie**: So, the house of Peace was established in 1990 as a 501-C3 nonprofit organization with the mandate to offer physical and spiritual refuge to victims of war, and that we would do that from the very first in companionship with adults with disabilities. And that kind of challenging mandate came out of my biography, having worked really all my adult life and lived in community with adults with impairments in intentional community, but at the same time within that community, Camp Hill, in 1980 receiving some boat refugees from Vietnam, and in 1986, two brothers and one sister of one of those. So from 1980 to 1990 I have lived with, um, the wonderful magic of people with some disabilities really welcoming and participating in the healing and empowerment of refugees from Vietnam who had really lost everything. And at the end of those ten years - this was all in the framework of living in intentional community - at the end of the ’80 to ’90 period it had become clear to me that there was really a call in my own personal life to establish a community where we would serve those who had been uprooted through the violence of war, and live together in intentional community, and ask our friends who had what ordinarily are called handicaps or disabilities to have a fundamental role in the healing of the refugee person. It’s a chemistry very little is known about, but people who have the generosity of spirit which characterizes a lot of mentally handicapped adults (so-called), who have a certain selflessness, interested in the other, no vested interests, they have an incredibly healing capacity on the refugee. And we saw that work a kind of magic. And so we came finding this house in Ipswich close to the refugee community in Boston. It’s a 300 year old house, the founder of whom, Nathaniel Rogers, was pastor of this church in Ipswich for 43 years, and welcomed itinerants and victims of religious persecution, and had a history of working on behalf of human rights back in 1727. And the transcendentalists knew this house and stayed here, so it really was a phenomenon that we founded, that a huge number of people got together to fund it and make it work financially. And that shortly after we moved in we got the first phone call, could we take some Ameraisian children from Vietnam who had been located through the State Department, and there was a kind of sweep off the streets of Ho Chi Min City, the abandoned children of GI’s, and 10,000 of them were brought to America, scattered over the country, traumatized very often no goodbyes to their Vietnamese mothers, they were all children of GI, and we began our work helping with people in need of special care as refugees were helped by people in need of special care, who had some disabilities but participated in creating a healing environment. So that started in 1990, my background having been with people with special needs and refugees, and my – and I was a single parent at that time with three children, and five Vietnamese children, and John my husband came out of this stream. He was a defense attorney, in Brattleboro, Vermont, but had become a fundamental leader in the work against nuclear weapons and had traveled the world and had been an advocate for human rights and was one of the famous Ploughshares 8, a group in 1990 who – in 1980, sorry – who were the first ever to go into a weapons facility and disarm not-yet-loaded missile cones, mark 12A missile cones in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. So we had met as a result of my involvement in the Peace Movement, and came here together, were married here, and proceeded to have 500 family members over the course of these last 23 years. So it was then in 1990 we became involved with Lutheran Children and Family Services, which we’ll call L…um, Lutheran Children… LCFS at that point. It later became LSS, Lutheran Social Services. But that was the fundamental agency that was relocating unaccompanied refugee minors, URMP, all over the country. So it’s important – you’ve probably done your homework and know some of these initials – but they were a wonderful group during refugee resettlement of mostly adolescents. And so they began primarily with Vietnamese boat children, and adolescents who had largely been incar… I say incarcerated, but… housed on places like Palau, Pedong, and Malaysia where there were 50,000 adolescents in the process of making the transition from Vietnam to countries of refuge worldwide. And then came the overthrow of Aristide and the intense political persecution of Haitians by the *ton-ton macouts*. So you’re familiar with some of that?  
  
**Jillian:** Yes.   
  
**Carrie:** Great, so stop me if I’m giving you any trite or irrelevant… I don’t want to get sidetracked, but it’s important that you know that that population lived in an extremely violent time in the history of Haiti, and had this great leader and this moment of breakthrough with Aristide, and then this huge suppression and violence under Cédras. Cédras having been trained in Fort Benning, Georgia, at the School of the Americas, now called by us in the Peace Movement ‘School of the Assassins,’ and that was bad press, so now it’s the, you know, ‘Institute for western hemisphere..’ whatever, the School of the Americas. Also this weekend is where the annual protest of people crossing the line there, protesting the violence perpetrated by the SOA, that takes place… So Cédras took hold in Haiti and the population that we’re going to be talking about were basically young men who themselves usually through the involvement of their fathers and families were pro-Aristide, anti-Cédras, freedom advocates. And as you know, I’m sure, it’s beautiful if you’ve done your homework, I love it that you’re able to restructure the events of this period in history, because it’s so relevant to what’s going on now and why Guantánamo is such an evil, dark hole on the face of the earth. So, as you know, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people left Haiti in fragile, horrible, unseaworthy boats, fleeing Cédras, and a level of political persecution that was, you know, in a way unprecedented in the Western hemisphere, you might say, so close to Florida and, I just, again, as many countries had experienced… Guatemala, El Salvador… violent, violent persecution… so these kids left and were taken, either from sea or wherever they landed. Of course as you know thousands upon thousands drowned. And many were taken to Guantánamo. And they were there housed in these tents on the tarmac, some of them for more than a year, as the slow, grinding process of discerning who were viable asylee candidates, asylum candidates, who should just be shipped back to Haiti. So how that process, how that discernment went by the US government is really a question, how the UNHCR, High Commissioner for Refugees, was thoroughly… that’s your research, I’m sure, to do… but we did resurrect some very early articles about this which you may or may not have and so we’ve made a packet for you.

So this, how we got involved is that in 1992 Cardinal Bernard, Cardinal Law, and infamous name in the history of Boston, was now of course was shipped out to Rome, which is where he lives after, you know, the irony of severe cover-up of child abuse, he took 111, I believe, Haitian kids out of Guantánamo and brought them to Boston in the summer of ’92. And they came to the espousal retreat house in Waltham, Stigmatine Priests, and they were interviewed and re-interviewed, and the foster care agencies were brought in, primarily Lutheran Social Services, and homes were found for these kids. [Carrie begins to go through the packet and identify each document]

So this is an article with Wadson [Michel] as a young man, sorry it’s old and too dark and all of that, but it tells you a little bit about that program.[[1]](#footnote-0)   
  
This is very important for your research, a report on living conditions for Haitian refugees on Guantánamo, so that’s the best we could come up with, but the picture alone says it all. 16,000 people in tents on the tarmac.[[2]](#footnote-1) And what we’ve discovered is that in the written face-sheet of each arriving refugee it says Guantánamo, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, whereas interviews with the kids say ‘I was there at least a year, Mom!’ and give corroborating evidence. **John Schuchardt** [arriving late]: Hi there!  
  
**Carrie:** Oh good, there we are, so this is my husband. John, we’re just on the tarmac at Guantánamo.  
  
**Jillian:** Hi, I’m Jillian.  
  
**John:** Jillian!  
  
**Olivia:** Hi, I’m Olivia.

**John:** Olivia, how nice of you to come!  
  
**Carrie:** Go get yourself a cup and…  
  
**John:** I’m a little late, but I got so much done!  
  
**Jillian:** Well that’s good!  
  
**Carrie:** Well we’re recording now, so you come and join us, we’re just up to the point of giving them the articles we have, which I think, I really think they could be helpful. You may, you may I don’t know, with your computer expertise you’ll say, ‘what is she saying, we’ve got tons of articles like this.’ But this is very firsthand. [Carrie continues to hand us papers and identifies their topics]  
  
Correspondence between agencies about concern for the human rights abuses on Guantánamo. Church World Service statement on Haitian refugees, immigration and refugee program, two issues of that.[[3]](#footnote-2) Another one on behalf of Haitian and Cubans who were incarcerated there.[[4]](#footnote-3)  
This is the letter that is addressing foster parents asking them about the conference on Cuban and Haitian unaccompanied refugee minors that will be taken and we will be looking for home and thank you for considering.[[5]](#footnote-4)

And then this is a very wonderful woman, Ellen Powers, who actually stayed with the kids on Guantánamo, and was very active up here in interviewing them.[[6]](#footnote-5) We’re not in touch with her anymore, but these are articles that tell you about their arrival in Boston. And then this I just found, with very poor quality from *El Mundo*, having to do with the Cuban minors kept, of which we had I think only two, kept on Guantánamo, [[7]](#footnote-6) and some very viable propaganda on Cuban minors, bravery, ‘the new world,’ how awful the Castro regime, etc.[[8]](#footnote-7) So we hope by giving this to you that you have a very well-informed filter.  
  
**John:** What article is that?  
  
**Carrie:** I just pulled it out last night, having to do with interview with [unintelligible] and so forth, you can look at it later. How ‘we want to stay in America’ and such. So this, this I think has clues for you, because you’re on a hunt for, there are scraps of information I think, and you really need as much documentation as I hope is possible… I can imagine the more documentation… so those articles should give a little push to your… they, you know, now you can just google the refugee services involved and one will lead to the other. There will be maybe some case managers that are still, that would be willing to talk to you, or… Wadson will be a gold mine. And he will be interviewed soon I expect by two other friends, and the four of them will put all of their information together. We think it’s good that he’s interviewed separately, because he’s worthy of a whole interview because… We should preface our description of our work with Haitian boys, that without Wadson it probably would not have been possible, himself being Haitian, himself being at that time I think school social worker, still in his own graduate studies, extremely compassionate, but objective with the set of skills that were indispensible for managing life with these kids.

So what I’ve done is just restructure the founding of the House of Peace, the Haitian boys came when we were four years old, and our primary mood then or work of the house. Basically we lived here with unaccompanied refugee minors of different countries so that we had, at the same time, like eight or nine boys, and one girl, from Eritrea and Ethiopia, from Haiti and Vietnam, and then Cuba, El Salvador. And so they lived together in community here. They all went to the local high school. We had seven varsity soccer starting players, and managed to integrate a rather monocultural high school teams and so forth, but with kids from many cultures, who had played soccer in refugee camps, often without a ball, improvised whatever, and had tremendous support and help from the Ipswich School system. Invaluable help, through ESL tutors, who bonded with these kids from these many countries. So into the House of Peace came several, we’ll say, Haitian unaccompanied refugee minors, who had been on the tarmac at Guantánamo for what we now realize, and then realized, un… hard to document periods of time. Longer rather than shorter. And the point of the interview would be what we met in them, and then – a recent interview last week with one of them, maybe to say of that recent interview of someone who is now 39 years old, that he was terrified to say anything about Guantánamo, except the daily routine and so forth. That the lasting scars, the nature of which he would only just touch on, he couldn’t consent to an interview with you, felt very unsafe. And the obvious PTSD, which is not only from the events in Haiti, but the events on Guantánamo, really are still as PTSD scars always are, very close to the surface, and we knew we were scratching that surface and we didn’t want to inflict pain but we certainly wanted to have him feel he had a voice. Because what I hope your project is trying to do is to give the victims a voice. And if ever there are voiceless people, it’s the people of Guantánamo right now. And if you’re doing anything, anything at all, to give them their voice, you know we just can’t thank you enough. Because that’s a major suffering and scar for us, and for any person of conscience who has any idea of what’s going on there.

So they came, and there’s safety in numbers. Cardinal Law flew them up, put them at the Stigmatine Priests’ in… where did we say it was, Framingham or whatever it was, sorry… Waltham, and then they were, several foster homes were found for them. The documented background of each young man was hard to get. Their affidavits depended on the young man giving his story. They all arrived with nothing from their tumultuous boat exodus, except a burden of life-long trauma from just the boat trip itself, highlighted by one of the young men. Big, strong guy who went to the backyard, and at that time we had a little lobster boat, and he, it was in the driveway because there’s a harbor right down the street, and we used to take all our people out in that, very therapeutic, and he looked at it and said, ‘oh Mom, good I’m glad I know I have a way to escape if I need to.’ And when I said that in the presence of Wadson the other day and reminded him of that, he just took his head in his hands. Because that so epitomizes the fact that kids can never feel save after what they had been through. Most of the kids we had from Guantánamo were Haitian boys with – this is just Haiti we’re talking about now, not Cuba – were boys that had, whose fathers had been assassinated. That seemed to be the documented catalyst for them having to flee, find a boat owner or captain, and leave. A little different from the Vietnamese boat exodus where it was often parents who would often arrange for their sons, who would be conscripted into the army, to get out before they were 15 or 16. So there was more trauma, often extremely sudden and violent, when in the case of the young men, or man we’ll describe in a minute, his father was executed in the next room. The army trucks pulled up and got out. He was in the back room, father in the front room. Someone screams, ‘run,’ and he goes out the window as the machine guns kill his father. So he didn’t actually see it with his eyes, but heard it. And some had seen it with their own eyes. So you have that initial trauma, preceded by the overthrow of Aristide, and the rise of the *ton-ton macouts*. And then you have procuring a placement on the boat. And then you have the boat journey, which, of course, as you’ve read about probably, I assume, was horrific. And many, many, many perished. Those that did slide into port, and then usually were accosted by the Coast Guard before, had their illusion of freedom at last totally violated when they arrived on Guantánamo. But then the picture changes because as our friend describes, ‘they took me to a place and I had a bed and sheets.’ And he said it in our interview four times. And this is, what, ’90, 22 years later, 21 years later, ‘I had sheets.’ So it says something about life in Haiti, a lot about army regulation. You see the picture of the tents and every cot had sheets. And that meant a lot. They had food and they had each other. So the first state on Guantánamo, the way we understand it from our interview the other night, was the… stage one: identify. So they were each given a badge and a wrist bracelet, and put into a category. Second stage was an interview to determine whether they indeed were unaccompanied refugee minors, were there sibling, prioritizing who would come to America first, and so forth. And then the third stage was the waiting. And there are different documentations on how long people had to wait. On paper it says in this person’s affidavit four months. He was shocked to hear that and could clearly recount the seasons he went through: hot, hotter, too hot, slightly cooler. And his friend, who ended up coming here with, had been there at least two years. So that discrepancy in documentation through the State Department is interesting, but it’s something you need to factor in to how the processing went. We never, ever got involved in discrepancies of that sort, except in terms of healing, counseling, therapeutic impulse, and obviously a kid who’s been there only four months may not have seen as much as those that were there for two years. And the ones that said to us ‘I was there two years,’ you know, needed a lot more counseling and therapeutic intervention and had a lot more symptoms. At least in the finite group of kids that we had who had been on Guantánamo. And we have, you have to remember for your research, a small sample group. But I think it’s extremely representative of the, what this report says 16,000 that were there on Guantánamo, if you can imagine. And that was only a part of the base. So we talked about medical testing, and anybody with HIV disappeared. They just went. We never knew where they went. They were in the more developed part of the base that had a hospital, clinics, but we never ever knew what happened to them after that. I don’t know what happened to them after that, if they were returned to Haiti, sent to another country, or assimilated into the US with medical oversight, I don’t know. Once this particular young man, who was, I would say, if it’s possible to say, more amenable to therapeutic intervention, maybe you would say, John, less traumatized than many of the kids we had, more able to talk about it, to break down, to cry, he went to the kitchen and said ‘can I work.’ And it was the most healthy thing for him, that every day he left the tent and was picked up at a jeep and went to a central kitchen or something. And that way he had a far more positive experience than the kids that kicked a tin can or airless soccer ball or whatever was available to them. So we are now almost a full 20 years after their time, and he described it and then –this is last Saturday – said, after a long interview at a table in Dunkin’ Donuts, ‘and I can’t tell you what really happened. It’s too dangerous to go there.’ He would not speak about the level of abuse. We asked him specifically about guards, and he said they only got rough when they needed to, and people would fight with each other and they had to break it up. But we know that the level of trauma among these 16,000 people on the tarmac under the 105 degree summer plus, that they were in grave danger. So the articles speak about that in a very tactful way. Church representatives: ‘we believe that the situation on Guantánamo for Cuban and Haitian refugees is untenable for the following reasons.’ So you can read that. But we felt it was so indicative of the level of pain and abuse that all these years later he couldn’t, wouldn’t, shaking, speak about it. And you may get far, much farther, with Wadson, because of course he speaks Kreyol, he hangs out with these kids, he keeps his relationship with them. So he may have more access to information even in his recent conversation with a couple of the guys. But when they came here the level of dysfunction… well let’s say it positively. The level of function was phenomenal. That any kids could survive what they survived, a) on Haiti, b) on the boat trip, and c) on Guantánamo, arrive and function in a local public high school at all shows survivor skills that none of us would probably ever be capable of. So we know that. Where the dysfunction was, they all had PTSD. They all were living under a brutal military regime of Cédras who was put into power, as we said, by the US, was complicit in the overthrow of Aristide, and many had witnessed the assassination of family members, many fled with army brutes behind them and so forth. So plunking them down, not speaking English, in a local, almost all-white American high school – how can you possibly describe the culture shock there? But Ipswich High School surrounded them with a core of ESL teachers who became their confidants, their guidance counselors, and the House of Peace had a core, my own two teenage sons by blood and my own two Vietnamese sons who were also boat refugees but had been reunited with their family, and so they had a core here of foster siblings, which is a very awful term, of brothers, who were in the high school with them, and protected them, and helped them with homework, and helped them to acculturate. And because – this sound too American – but because Ipswich was a very struggling soccer team, and suddenly there was this influx of these champion soccer players, who had played for years on that same tarmac in Guantánamo, because there was so little else for them to do, people began to drop food at the door, ‘keep them strong, keep them well-fed, we need them on the team.’ And of course the team began to win games and so forth. So academically they struggled, but they had excellent ESL teachers. Behaviorwise, we were pretty much able with most of them, we thought, to keep the lid on the knee-jerk reaction when they got elbowed or hurt more consciously on the soccer field, and there would be responses that you would get on the tarmac in Cuba, which was, you know, often ‘get that guy and beat him a little.’ They, we were able to work with all of that and they became really valued teammates. And they became very valued classmates. And I have to put a great deal of the credit on my sons and foster sons from Vietnam who really took on the task of supporting these kids in their adjustment. We had one boy who had repeated panic attacks, even hospitalization, you know, breathing into paper bags, you know, just PTSD, flashbacks all the time. Not only from Haiti, but from Guantánamo. And so there were a lot of behaviors that surfaced that were very threatening behaviors, and we had to work with people very very closely to protect these kids from themselves, protect others from their knee-jerk reaction, and try to keep a steady pace of security-building, trust-building, and outlets. Constant outlets for their fear, for their anxiety, for their breathing, for their lack of communication with family members which was abruptly cut off. So, some graduated from high school. There were tragedies along the way, kids who were so dysfunctional that their behavior was profoundly threatening, and we could not keep them in a safe, secure, social setting here. And they had to be put into another foster care home, which the agency had where needs of the kids were more pronounced or more… behaviors were more antisocial. And there had to be what’s called ‘specialized’ foster care where you didn’t know that sometimes, so after the fact it was a lot of damage control to heal the wounds that they inflicted out of the profound, profound nature of their own wounds. So we worked with that. Some graduated. We did senior proms and college applications. Some went on to community colleges or other colleges. But there was never far behind the specter of dysfunctional behavior, flashbacks, traumatic behaviors connected with childhood trauma in Haiti and adolescent trauma on Guantánamo. So that became a real struggle. And we’re in touch with some, and lost touch with others, have testified in court as character witnesses for those who have gotten into trouble, have managed to sustain a certain positive relationship with the next gen… with these guys who are married, struggling, divorcing, who have children, and altogether truly humbled and amazed when any of them really make it and hold the same job for eight years, like the guy we talked to the other day. And we grieve for the mistakes and pain that the others carry in their lives and have inflicted on other people out of their dysfunctional behavior.   
So the role of Guantánamo in all of that? You put x number of kids together – this says 16,000, the article on the Cuban refugees says 23,000 - in close, close proximity, victims of incredible violence in their… in Haiti, a different mood and history entirely to the Cuban exodus, and so this article on Cuba is very slanted, anti-Castro, anti-Communist and so forth… but you put that all together and you just know that the time on Guantánamo… and this guy said, ‘Well they saved my life. The boat, we were bailing out the boat when the Coast Guard found us. So they did save our life. And if Guantánamo had to be the hell we had to go through to get to America, so be it.’ And it’s a very different, you know they were not incarcerated in the way that current prisoners on Guantánamo are, from Iraq, say, or Afghanistan. It’s a very different situation in one way. But you take this place on the tip of Cuba, you look at the geography and wonder how is it possible that a nation, that Cuba has this black hole. You know we’ve been to Cuba, we’ve met the people, we’ve traveled, and it’s a nation unto itself the way the American army base in Bagdad, the biggest in the world is, where the homeland security outpost, just to say it’s an inconceivable but typical military base beyond the law. So that, that’s how I describe it, and then you take it from there and…

**John**: Would you mind just in your own words telling me what the focus of your research is?  
  
**Jillian**: Certainly… well we are just aiming to collect any stories, memories, either of the Haitian refugees or individuals who have worked with them. So anything you can tell us about your work with the refugees, what you know of what they went through, and also what you have experienced in that, and how they reacted to your attempts to help.   
  
**John**: And is this, this is specifically focusing on Guantánamo?  
  
**Olivia**: Yeah, it’s for the Guantánamo Public Memory Project, and it’s a site, a website that is just devoted towards, you know, putting voices to people who were in Guantánamo or have experience with it, and so as a group we’re kind of each getting different pieces of the puzzle and trying to put a story line together.  
  
**Jillian**: We in Boston are working on the Haitian refugees, but there are other groups throughout the country working on the project collecting stories from other eras in Guantánamo’s history as well.

**John**: Very interesting.  
  
**Carrie**: Like what other ways?

**Jillian**: Well they, other people have interviewed military personnel who have been there since, um, some people going back to the 1960s. So there were some women who had grown up on the base, American women who had entirely different stories than the refugees. There has also been some work, some people working with prisoners, Iraqi prisoners who have been held on the base recently and have since been released. Now obviously this is not people who are currently held there, it’s not possible to interview them, but at least trying to get a picture of this continuation of this theme of incarceration.

**John**: Of course there are some leading attorneys in Boston who have been involved [unintelligible]… the ones who have been there, who are outraged at the suspension of constitutional rights and things that we never thought would be possible, that the US would adopt a policy of extreme human rights violations, which would be kidnapping, torture, no right to trial or council. So I’ll try to remember this one attorney who was just outstanding… as I’m thinking about this, I’m sort of backing up and thinking about what is the context. What is the history. And so first of all, of course the Spanish American war in ’98. And that whole detail, complex history, as it affects Cuba, and the Philippines, and the establishment of the US Naval base there in Cuba, confiscating that land, although at various times in may have come under treaty, the fact it was taken by, as a result of conquest. And so that’s… and then its current use of course is so extreme, and a part of a network of secret prisons that we have no idea how many there are, or where they are. But if you google, which you can do, satellite map, and look in, that to me looks like a very major, maximum-security prison which is being used at a far greater level than we know about, and would not have such a huge prison if it were not, it’s not just holding the several hundred that we read about but it must be in constant use. And so that’s the aspect that we would have an urgent concern about. But going back to this situation, the next thing that occurs, you know, that occurs to me, is the trauma of Haiti, and the US supporting the dictators in Haiti consistently. Now when I was in the Marine Corps, training in Quantico, 1965, we had two platoons of Haitian marines being trained with us at Quantico. And you ask yourself, ‘what, why are you training marines, Haitian marines?’ And of course it’s to wage war against their own people. There’s no external enemy. There’s no other purpose but to maintain the reign of terror and oppression that was associated with Papa Doc, Baby Doc, and the Duvaliers, the *ton-ton macouts,* and that was possible through US training, US money. So this is a context that’s extremely important in this narrative. And then as Carrie mentioned and you are aware, there was a successful overthrow of the dictatorship through extraordinary organizing and courage, and inspired leadership of Father Aristide. Which violated US policy, and so Cédras, and this happens to be the weekend where there’s a massive demonstration, you probably mentioned, at the School of the Americas, where Cédras was trained….

**Carrie**: Did you know about that?

**Jillian**: You mentioned it earlier.

**Olivia**: Sorry?

**Carrie**: I’m asking you do you know about the annual vigil at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia led by Father Roy Bourgeois?

**Jillian**: I had not heard of it, but you did mention it earlier today

**Olivia**: I… no.

**Carrie**: Yeah, yeah, that would be something for you to look up on…

**John:** Well father Roy Bourgeois is a Vietnam veteran, [unintelligible] priest for close to 40 years now, and very involved in Latin America, and the people who carried out the assassination of Archbishop Romero were trained at the School of the Americas. And so he has maintained a constant presence, a vigil there, and annually there is a tremendous demonstration at Ft. Benning, Georgia. And over the years he’s assembled all of this information on all of the assassinations in many countries in South America, Central America and the Caribbean, where he’s able to identify who the assassins were and that they graduated from the School in Fort Benning, Georgia. So hundreds and hundreds of people have been arrested each year, and that happens to be taking place right now. Well Cédras was a graduate, and they specifically train them in torture and death squad operation and how to terrorize and repress a population. So there is this context. And then what happened to bring 16,000 people to Guantánamo? The real trauma is on the shores of, in Haiti. One can just barely imagine, because how many ended up in Cuba, or Puerto Rico, or any of the other islands, or South America, how many drowned? The numbers, and the terror, and the fleeing that was happening. We have a very dim picture of, except the main trauma that our young people came through was the trauma of growing up in a situation of great fear, fleeing for their lives after seeing family members assassinated, just barely escaping with their own lives. And so within that context, you know, [one guy] could only repeatedly say that he had no fear. He knew it was flee or die. So he was in a adrenaline-packed mode, that didn’t question the fleeing. He had no choice but to flee. And with the boat overloaded and taking water, he was very happy to be rescued and taken to Guantánamo. And there he describes, as Carrie has already mentioned, this clear segregation process. So his report is just about one of the, you know, one stream, which was the underage, he was 18, and underage and approved for immigration. So immediately that alleviated enormous dimensions of his fear. There were those who were taken and they had the virus, and I think he used the expression ‘they were taken downtown,’ or where there were medical facilities, and he doesn’t know, you would have to speak to someone from that group to find out what happened. And I think that’s a very important story, very important question. What happened to all those individuals who did test positive for HIV? Many of those who are segregated, put in an area for return. And it seemed to be the indication that that’s where most of the fights would break out. Because they were angry, they were frustrated, they were being held for an indefinite period of time. Usually these would be within the camp, and then the military would have to come in and handcuff and take away and maybe use some force. But by and large, what I heard described was a very well run camp for a very large number of people. And there was no intentional, I don’t believe any intentional kind of abuse or deprivation. He emphasized again and again he had plenty of food, working in the kitchen he had food privileges. There’s always an economy that develops selling cigarettes. So he didn’t smoke, he was given cigarettes, they were given cigarettes, he could sell those. And this always develops in the camp. Also with food, he could have a little extra privilege and surplus. So showers, clean sheets, food, considerable amount of freedom of movement and trust, it was more than a year that he was there. There’s that uncertainty and anxiety where you were going, but the fear of losing your life wasn’t there. Or the deprivation that he had lived in. So he fled to Aruba first. Flew, with money his mother gave him, and was basically living on the streets there. And so that was so desperate that he flew back to Cub… to Haiti, and then, when there was no alternative, cost maybe $3000 to get a place on these boats that were kind of constructed in place, seaworthy or not, an engine was purchased, an hour was set, some of the people that paid didn’t get on, must have, you know, this is just about impossible to reconstruct in your own imagination. It’d only have to come from firsthand narratives. But again, the overall significance of Guantánamo is in the sense, I’m sort of in my own mind kind of separating it from administering the Navy, and I would say doing the best they could. That being said, you’ve got 16,000 people to take care of, and they put up tents, and they maintained cleanliness and food and showers, and sheets, and, you know, I think probably did an extremely fine job of that, as you would expect from the US Navy administering. At the same time, Guantánamo, again when I was in the Marine Corps, spring of ’65, Johnson ordered the invasion of the Dominican Republic. The other half of the island of Haiti. So the role of that base as an iron fist... of course we were supporting the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. And again there was a popular movement, there were youth and priests and idealists seeking to overthrow the dictatorship. Johnson sent in the Marines and crushed them like that. From Guantánamo. That’s where, that’s the meaning and the purpose of this base. So, you know, you’ve got two different narratives, it seems to me. Different realities. You have to hold the historic context, you have to understand these two very different countries, Haiti and Dominican Republic with a shared border but on a shared island, but two very different histories and economies and so forth. So it, on into the present time, and here we are Cold War ended in ’89, ’90 the Berlin Wall came down, it didn’t change, make life any better for Cuba. Guantánamo is the US hostility towards the regime. Which was supposed to be because they were communists. Because they had support from the Soviet Union. Well, when that disappears and that whole rationale disappears, policy does not change. And the open wound that Guantánamo is for the beautiful people, and Carrie and I had the privilege of being in Cuba, and the Dominican Republic a few times, but beautiful, beautiful people of Cuba being kept under a full-scale economic war, full-scale propaganda war, unrelenting. And the full, continued injustice of Guantánamo being maintained there on the island of Cuba. Which, it was astounding it was able to overthrow the US-supported Batista dictatorship there in 1959 and establish those this that the dictatorship and US was opposed to, which was literacy, education, health care, a measure of democratic and community-based involvement in government and policy. So, that, all of those histories, Cuba and Dominican Republic, Haiti, the US, the School of the Americas, you know, somehow is background to this. Background to this tremendous exodus, fleeing, the US reinstalling the dictatorship in Haiti, and now what was the motivation for picking up, and this is something that individuals wouldn’t know the larger policy, but since the US is reinstalling a dictator, we have to call that a fledgling democracy. Anything the US does is not to support a dictator but to support a ‘fledgling democracy.’ And so nobody would flee! They have no cause to flee. Of course obviously they’re fleeing by the tens of thousands. So you have to prevent that from reaching the American republic. And that’s part of what the Guantánamo was. Pick them up with the Coast Guard, Navy, massive operation, pick them up on the boats before they reached Louisiana or Florida, and this begins to be a consciousness. That there is a reign of terror in Haiti, stimulated by overthrowing the Aristide government, and just hold them. Just hold them. Don’t process them. So hold them, you know at least a year, and many at least two years. There may have been, and I think this is an important part of the story, what’s the longest period of time that anybody was held there? And we don’t, you know I don’t know. But I think that’s an important question. And so while you’ve got showers and sheets and food, and a regulated camp, you’ve got a larger policy that is concealing the truth. Concealing the iron fist of the United States, installing Cédras, overthrowing Aristide, and wanting the consequences not to be know by the world or by world opinion or by US opinion or by Congress. Because that’s a huge number of people to hold. Just the numbers. 5,000, 10,000, 15,000. 20,000 people who had fled by boat. Enormous. Just enormous.

**Carrie**: So, and with that, what, just for our benefit, and hopefulness, what is your goal here? Are you participating in this bigger project with a ‘close Guantánamo’ ultimate aim, or…?

**Jillian:** Well the main point of the project is just to collect the opposing voices, just to start that dialogue. I am certain that there are many people involved in the project that do have that aim. Not everyone I don’t believe, just the ultimate goal, right off, right now, is just to get that conversation started, about what Guantánamo means to the various groups involved. Understanding, as you have been mentioning, that, you know, the people running the base might have an entirely different view of what they were doing than how the Haitians or other refugees have seen it. So as of right now it is just starting that dialogue, getting that going. Where it goes from there, we can’t really tell yet.

**Carrie:** I think it’d be wonderful to be in touch with people from, I think right away of the Catholic worker which was in DC, main organizer for this ‘walk to Guantánamo’ a couple of years ago, and Frieda Barrigan is one of the key people to contact. And also Art Laffin, they actually went to Guantánamo, but they couldn’t, weren’t allowed on the base, and had a vigil there. This was before the force-feeding and the hunger strikes, so perhaps, we’ve been in touch with Julia Thomas, who you must know works… and I don’t think I mentioned that to her, so perhaps we can give her the phone numbers and so forth for these people, so that she could hear that piece of a group of activists who actually walked, had a walk and a witness at the gates of Guantánamo, advocating in that and as I say that’s before the current… and I don’t even know at the exact moment what the status of the hunger strike is. Do you know that, at Guantánamo?

**Jillian**: No, I mean the reporting that comes out of Guantánamo is sort of vague to begin with.

**John**: Yeah, very difficult to get.

**Carrie**: And I also told her, I think you’ve been in touch with attorneys from Boston that are advocating, advocate attorneys for prisoners on Guantánamo, as far as just looking. At Wesleyan University there was a father-daughter team of attorneys who were very involved in interviewing people at Guantánamo and I was just looking, I had promised that, I thought I had it all ready for your information today, one of the attorneys who’s been working at Guantánamo. But as long as you’ve been interviewing them. They’re of course the current front-runners in knowing what’s going on there.

**Jillian**: Yes, there have been several interviews with lawyers, at least among our group at Northeastern. There are two groups interviewing lawyers, and there are several others outside of our university as well.

**John**: It’s a most worthwhile project that you’re engaged in, thank you, thank you for your work.

**Olivia**: It’s been a very interesting project, that’s for sure.

**Jillian**: Well thank you for helping us out.

**Carrie**: You’re welcome, and we would really like to see any work in progress here, I mean you probably have to filter things, but interviews with detainees, prisoners at Guantánamo who have been released for example, we would be so interested to see that and keep abreast of your work and whatever you write. It would be wonderful because, I said to John, it helps our conscience, because every day we should be working for the closing of Guantánamo. Obama put that as a great, ‘this is what’s going to happen in my first year.’ And here we are. So you really, this is very timely, what you’re doing. Keep at it, it’s so important. I have said that to many people, that how wise you are to look at the history, it’s so important. How did this piece of land on Cuba become this dark hole into which so many people have disappeared? And what is its biography? So I think that reconstructing the history of Guantánamo and the populations who have been incarcerated or transitioned there is really important, I’m glad you’re doing that. So I know your colleagues will have a wonderful interview with Wadson, he is a vivacious, precious person of great insight and experience, and he will help your project forward too.

1. Paul Becket, ‘Haitian Refugee Children Find Temporary Safe Haven,’ *The Pilot* 163, no. 30 (August 7, 1992): 1, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. ‘NGOs Report on Living Conditions For Haitian Refugees on Guantánamo,’ *Monday* 13, no. 16 (August 15, 1994): 1-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, ‘Statement on Haitian Refugees,’ September 24, 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. ‘CWS/IRP Committee Speaks Out on Behalf of Haitians and Cubans,’ *Monday* 13, no. 19 (October 10, 1994): 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Letter, Jeanne Woodward to ‘Foster Parent,’ November 1, 1994. [Woodward is program manager of Lutheran Social Services of New England’s Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Phillip Bennett, ‘Little and in Limbo,’ *Boston Globe* (October 28, 1992): 1, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Julia Fairclough, ‘Massachusetts,’ *El Mundo* (Week of January 12, 1995): 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Jenifer McKim, ‘Cuban Minors Brave New World,’ *Boston Globe* (April 10, 1995): 13, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)