

Participant Informed Historical Research

The Restorative Inquiry established a collaboration with Professor Alisa Del Tufo from Bennington College in the spring of 2020 in order to conduct a participant-informed historical research project. Alisa helped recruit two Bennington College students, India Carter-Bolick and Gabriela Yadegari, to conduct the research. India and Gabriela met with the former residents to explore and record what Orphanage-related questions that the group wanted answered; and then conducted research into these questions, connecting with a variety of sources (including former residents); compiling documentation and photos; and preparing both interim and final reports. They shared their research with the participants in June and August.

The drop-down menu is structured around the questions that the former residents identified for research. You also can find reflection statements from India and Gabriela in the drop-down menu. Thank you India and Gabriela for your remarkable dedication, deep compassion, and unwavering commitment to the Restorative Inquiry.

Research Sources Include:

Jim Forbes, Senior Policy & Operations Manager for Vermont DCF Family Services
Sam Hemingway, Former journalist at Burlington Free Press
Christine Kenneally, Journalist and author (Buzzfeed article)
Jerome O'Neill, Burlington-based lawyer
Burlington Free Press archive (Newspapers.com)
University of Vermont public archive
About Burlington Vermont- Charles Edwin Allen
American Catholic Historical Society - William L. Lucey
The Catholic Church in the United States of America- Catholic editing Company
Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington Website (vermontcatholic.org)
Sisters of Providence Website (providenceintl.org)
Vermont Eugenics: A Documentary History Website (uvm.edu/~eugenics/)

Researcher's Statements

How did the Sisters of Providence come to the St. Joseph's Orphanage and what was the relationship between Bishop DeGoesbriand and Sisters of Providence?

How were unwed mothers viewed by the Catholic Church in the 1950's and 60's? How were they viewed by the community of Vermont?

How did gender separation evolve over time at the Orphanage?

How did the State of Vermont supervise the Orphanage?

How were foster parents identified and screened by the State of Vermont?

What role did the Catholic Church/Charities play in identifying and screening foster families?

Why did abuse become the norm in the Orphanage?

How could nuns think that way? What was the motivation that led to their actions?

How did specific children become targets for the nuns' abuse?

How did people in the know (Orphanage administrators) keep up false fronts about the abuse within the community and within their own families?

Why did the community give so much authority to the priests and nuns?

What research (medical and otherwise) was done on the children at the Orphanage?

Where are the children who died at the Orphanage buried?

Why did the Orphanage close?

Why is it that religion can get away with the abuse and not be held accountable? Is there a way to change this?

What does "Sovereignty" afford the Catholic Church? What doesn't it afford? How have other communities/nations dealt with the Church's sovereignty privileges? How was it not a conflict

of the separation of church and state for Vermont to place children at St. Joseph's Orphanage?

How do the former children see the impact of the Orphanage playing out in their lives?

How did the orphanage impact former children's relationships with faith, friendships, spousal relationships, children, education, career, and mental/emotional/physical health?

**What has given you strength to move through the impacts of the orphanage?
(What gifts or strengths do you have that you trace to your experiences at the Orphanage?)**

What do you think our community should learn from your experiences at the Orphanage?