William Overton Johnston, 1921-1998

Bill Johnston, director of the Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa (ECSA), one of the longest tenants at 339 Lafayette Street, died suddenly on June 4. Bill had been in ill health for some time, but his death was unexpected and came as a great shock for those of us who have worked in the building with him for many years.

Bill was born in Henderson, Kentucky and moved to New York City in 1932. He attended Columbia University and served in the Army during World War II. He was a combat soldier and, according to a biographical statement compiled by Michael Fleshman and Jim Cason of ECSA, "The carnage and inhumanity he witnessed during the war was to have a profound effect on his later life."

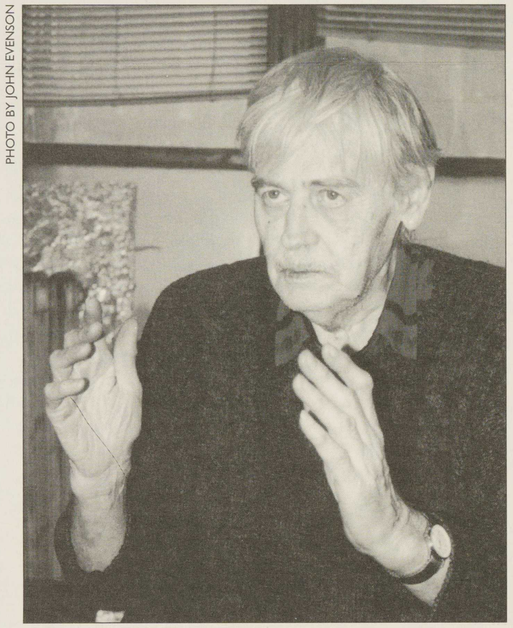


PHOTO BY JOHN EVENSON

In the 1950s he met Reverend Michael Scott, an early Episcopal campaigner against apartheid and an associate of A.J. Muste in his attempts to launch a World Peace Brigade. Scott introduced Bill to the suffering of the Black majority in southern Africa. Deeply moved by what he had learned, Bill, a devout Episcopalian, founded in 1956 what was then called Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, to educate and mobilize people to help end white minority rule and legalized racism in southern Africa. Operating on thin budgets, often without pay, he published a newsletter that became required reading for generations of anti-apartheid and human rights activists around the world. Bill counted among his friends African men and women who were later to become presidents, prime ministers and cabinet ministers in the newly independent countries of Africa.

His political commitments were not limited to racial and social justice in Africa. Over the years he was active in many campaigns for civil rights, fair housing, environmental protection, economic justice and equal opportunity in the US.

Over the last fifteen years, Bill spent virtually all his waking hours toiling away in the ECSA office at 339 Lafayette. He was here on weekends, holidays, no matter what the weather. Reading through countless newspapers and periodicals, he compiled an impressive archive on the anti-apartheid movement.

He always took the time to stop and chat with other tenants in the building: to share a joke, comment on an article in that day's paper, or tell us about movies he'd seen lately and which interesting programs were scheduled to air on TV. Bill had a profound sense of humor, and his deep cackling laugh echoed through the walls and down the hallway. He had a passion for politics and human rights, but also for science, nature and animals. A.J. the cat had a special fondness for Bill, and you'd often find them together in the office: Bill leaning back in his chair with his feet on the desk, reading the paper, with A.J. curled up contentedly in his lap.

Bill Johnston was buried in his family plot in Henderson, Kentucky on June 11. He will be greatly missed.

Day Without the Pentagon

Continued from page 1

tal every day but who may not be not aware of what goes on across the Potomac at the Pentagon.

At noon, as marchers cross the bridge and enter the Pentagon grounds, the rally will begin, featuring inspiring speakers, music and theater. After the rally, there will be more civil disobedience actions.

A Day Without the Pentagon is more than just a protest against militarism, it is a proclamation that all of us have the right to live in a world with health care and food for all, decent housing, good education, a clean environment, and a justice system that is truly just. To dramatize these concerns and show that all these things would be possible if we were free of the budget-busting expenditures of the military, four of the Pentagon's five sides will be named for different social concerns. For example, activists concerned with healthcare will gather at the South Entrance and create a medical clinic for the day. (Interestingly enough, the Pentagon was built to be converted to a hospital after the Second World War, a promise that was never fulfilled.) Stretchers and gurneys, and doctors with medical gear will show that our tax dollars would be put to better use guaranteeing healthcare—not warfare—for all. The other Pentagon entrances will be symbolically converted in support of other social needs, together building a model of a world disarmed, a world free from militarism.

As War Resisters League celebrates its 75th anniversary, we urge activists everywhere to join in this historic day of action, a Day Without the Pentagon. Hope to see you there!

For more information about A Day Without the Pentagon, contact Chris Ney or Linda Thurston at WRL, 339 Lafayette St, New York, NY 10012; 212-228-0450; email <wrl@igc.org>. Or, you can get updated information on the day's action plans at the Day Without the Pentagon website at http://www.nonviolence.org/wrl/nopentagon.htm. [This article was excerpted from a tactical manual for activists participating in A Day Without the Pentagon.]

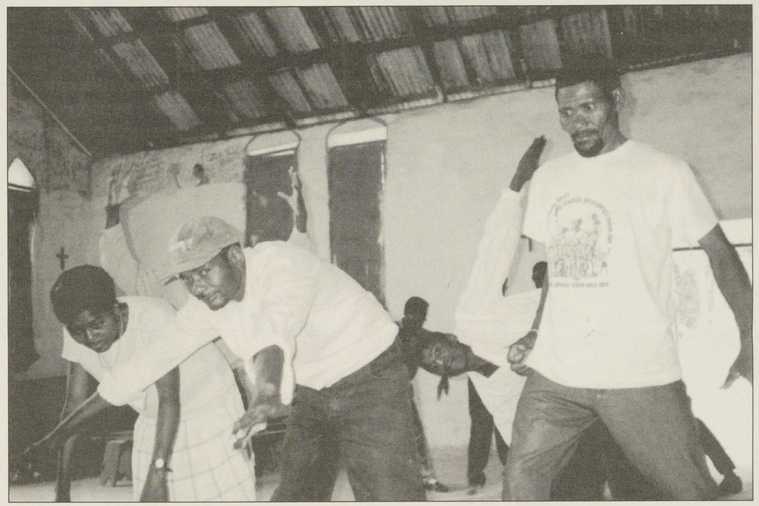
New Grants, April and June 1998

PAN-AFRICAN RECONCILIATION COUNCIL
Lagos, Nigeria: $1,000.

Pan-African Reconciliation Council (PARC) is a grassroots community of people working to promote peace, social justice and mutual understanding. This International Nonviolence Training Fund (INTF) grant goes for a training workshop entitled "Coping with Xenophobia," introducing a group of Rwandan and Zairean citizens resident in Nigeria to the philsophy of nonviolence and peacemaking as a means of social and political change.

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL
Berkeley, CA: $1,500.

PBI works to develop practical techniques, based on the principles of nonviolence, for the protection of human rights in situations of conflict. This INTF grant goes for the Haitian Nonviolence Training program, working with community activists in Haiti to build concrete skills for resolving conflicts and working nonviolently for social and economic justice.



Haitian activists take part in a human statue exercise to explore their responses to fear in conflict, as part of a Peace Brigades International (PBI) training program in Haiti.

RIO MARIA COMMITTEE OF THE U.S.
Cambridge, MA: $1,000.

The U.S. Rio Maria Committee is dedicated to building solidarity with the people of the rural Eastern Amazon region in southern Pará state, Brazil, so that they can bring about land reform and social change. Our grant goes for a speaking tour in three U.S. cities by Luzia Canuto, international president of the Rio Maria Committee in Brazil, to broaden support for the Committee's efforts and educate the public about efforts to oppose violence and injustice in the region.

SERVICIO INTERNACIONAL PARA LA PAZ (SIPAZ)
Santa Cruz, CA: $1,000.

SIPAZ (International Service for Peace) is a coalition of North American, Latin American and European organizations which formed in response to the armed conflict in Mexico's Chiapas state. SIPAZ actively supports efforts to find nonviolent solutions to the conflict and to the fundamental problems that prompted it. Our grant goes to support a trip to the U.S. by the SIPAZ coordinator in Chiapas, Ricardo Carvajal, for speaking engagements to educate the U.S. public in support of a lasting peace in Chiapas.

SUPPORT TEAM INTERNATIONAL FOR TEXTILERAS (STITCH)
Chicago, IL: $2,000.

STITCH is a network of North American women active in trade unions and grassroots organizations, working to establish cooperation and solidarity between women in Guatemala and North America. Our grant goes for a training exchange on organizing skills and women's leadership, in order to strengthen union organizing in Guatemala's maquiladora (export assembly) sector while enabling North American activists to learn from their Guatemalan counterparts.

The A.J. Muste Memorial Institute makes small grants to groups doing nonviolent organizing for social change. If you know of such a group, please encourage them to apply to us for funding. Write the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012 or call us at (212) 533-4335 to receive a copy of our grant guidelines and our latest roster of grants. Our next deadlines for proposals will be July 27 and October 5, 1998. Our guidelines and grant rosters are also available on our web site, located at http://www.nonviolence.org/ajmuste

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