

**Rev. John Collins** had a distinguished career as a Methodist minister, pastoring multi-racial congregations in East Harlem and the South Bronx. During his years at Union Theological Seminary, he co-founded the Student Interracial Ministry that sent hundreds of white seminarians to work in Black churches in the South and Black students to work in white churches. During his years in East Harlem in the 1960s he helped to organize MEND (Massive Economic Neighborhood Development), the East Harlem component of the War on Poverty and served on its Board of Directors. He was also elected chair of the East Harlem Education Committee and became a leader in the effort to achieve community control of the schools, getting arrested with a sympathetic District Superintendent and some community leaders for trying to open schools that had been padlocked during a teachers' strike. John also organized the first Neighborhood Youth Corps and the campaign for a civilian complaint review board in the New York City Police Department. Between his two pastorates he held several different positions as an organizer and gadfly for justice.

From 1977-1979 John worked as a consultant with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. When the first major plant closing occurred at Youngstown Sheet and Tube in Ohio, costing 10,000 jobs, John was assigned as liaison to the Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley, a coalition of religious and labor leaders seeking (unsuccessfully) to reopen the mill under worker community ownership.

From 1979-1986 he worked as Co-Director of Clergy and Laity Concern, a national interreligious peace and justice organization, organizing campaigns for the Nuclear Freeze, working against the deployment of US cruise missiles in Europe, and campaigning against South African apartheid, among other issues. During the hostage crisis in Iran, in 1979, a delegation of U.S. religious people was organized—out of the Collins' living room—to go to Iran.

During the US Contra War in Nicaragua, John co-founded Witness for Peace, an interreligious organization that placed American volunteers in Nicaragua to live among the people in the war zones and document what American tax dollars were being used for. Witness for Peace (WFP) also organized delegations of Americans who traveled to the war zones, gathering stories and testimonies about Contra atrocities and returning home to try to influence members of Congress

to stop the illegal war. John served on WFP's Board for several years and led several delegations to the war zones.

John not only pastored in the South Bronx but organized the building of over 500 units of low and affordable housing. During Jesse Jackson's 1984 primary campaign, John organized Religious Leaders for Jackson and wrote speeches on peace policy for the candidate. After his "official" retirement in 1994, John continued to organize as well as teach courses at Fishkill Correctional Facility.

Over the years John was a tireless counselor, advocate, and champion for hundreds of people who felt they had been victimized by institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of injustice. Much of this work was done quietly without outward notice or fanfare.

Consonant with his commitment to economic and social justice, John was very supportive of the National Jobs for All Network, participating in many of our events and demonstrations. He frequently attended the University Seminar on Full Employment, Social Welfare, and Equity.

John was lovingly cared for during a long illness by Sheila, his wife of 60 years. In addition to Sheila, John is survived by their two daughters, Professor Jennifer Collins and Dr. Megan Collins, their husbands, and five grandchildren.