



Nellie Jean Pitts Sindab

A Celebration of the Life of Dr. Nellie Jean Pitts Sindab

**Saturday, February 24, 1996
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Peoples Congregational Church
4704 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC**

Damu Smith and Dana Alston, Moderators

Welcome/Prayer for Jean

*Rev. Archie LeMone,
Progressive National Baptist Convention
and Washington Office on Africa
Board of Directors*

Opening Remarks

Damu Smith and Dana Alston

Song

Vernice Miller, friend

**Nellie Jean Sindab:
Her Contribution to the Fight
against Apartheid and Racism
and for Human Rights and Peace**

*Nkechi Taija, friend and
former assistant to Dr. Sindab
at the Washington Office on Africa*

Tribute

*Howard Wolpe, Michigan,
former Member of Congress and
Chair, House Subcommittee on Africa*

**Nellie Jean Sindab: Her Contribution
to the Struggle for Environmental
and Economic Justice**

Damu Smith and Dana Alston

**Nellie Jean Sindab: Her Contribution
to the Struggle against Violence in
America and Efforts to Uplift Our Youth**

*Gaylord Thomas, the Evangelical
Lutheran Church of America and
The Things that Make for Peace*

Musical Selection

Lucy Murphy

**Nellie Jean Sindab: The Person,
Remembrance from an Old Friend**

Angela Dews

Statement from the Family

**Nellie Jean Sindab's Spiritual,
Physical and Emotional Journey
in the Fight to Live**

Dr. Gail Christopher

Song, The Lord's Prayer

*Lisa Andujar, goddaughter of
Nellie Jean Sindab*

**Video /Audio Presentation
featuring Nellie Jean Sindab**

**Select Reading of the Messages Sent to
Funeral and Memorial Celebration**

Musical Selection

Announcements

Please make your contributions to the Sisana Fund established by Jean to care for children. Checks should be made payable to the Sisana Fund and either left with one of today's ushers as you leave or may be sent to:

Ecumenical Development Initiative
475 Riverside Drive
Room 915
New York, NY 10115

The Nellie Jean Sindab Memorial Committee humbly urges that we all uphold the loving spirit of Nellie Jean: a humanitarian, a human rights and social justice activist and a loving and caring friend. She passed on January 8, 1996 in New York City.

The Committee extends a special thank you to Will Packard of Free Hand Press and Brian for their generous contribution of typesetting and graphic artwork for this program booklet.

Obituary

Dr. Jean Sindab, environmental and racial justice activist, dies

NEW YORK, Jan. 8, NCC News — Dr. Jean Sindab, 51, who led churches in the United States and worldwide in work for environmental and racial justice, including an end to apartheid in South Africa, died at home in Manhattan on January 8, 1996 following a year-long struggle against cancer.

Up until her death, she served the New York-based National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC) as Director for Environmental and Economic Justice/Hunger Concerns. In coalition with Catholic, Jewish and Evangelical Christian leaders through the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, she actively enlisted thousands of local congregations across the United States in work against environmental abuses affecting human well-being, especially of people of color and poor communities.

"Jean always said, 'I want to give my life to help my people,'" said the Rev. Dr. Joan B. Campbell, NCC General Secretary. "A brilliant woman, she gave her life for freedom and justice. She brought a joy of life and an optimism rooted in her Christian faith to every setting. She believed people would learn to live together and to love one another."

"Just days before she died, Jean said to me, 'There are worse things than dying - life filled with pain and poverty.' Jean's death is a major loss for the NCC of a unique person who made a very powerful contribution to the life of our churches. She will be sorely missed."

Before joining the NCC staff in 1991, Dr. Sindab was, from 1986-91, Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism, Geneva, Switzerland. She devised campaigns to mobilize international church support for sanctions against apartheid South Africa. She convened women from every continent to address the double burden of racism and sexism (1986) and "untouchable" women to form an ongoing effort against casteism (1987) and in 1989 organized a major ecumenical consultation on the needs of indigenous people worldwide.

She took a leave of absence from the WCC between April and July 1988 to serve as Senior Africa Advisor to the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign.

From 1980-86 she was executive director of the Washington Office on Africa in Washington, D.C., an Africa advocacy organization with strong roots in U.S. churches.

During her tenure, she campaigned tirelessly for an end to apartheid and for peace initiatives throughout southern Africa.

She has served as a consultant to the King Center for Non-Violence, the Rainbow Coalition, the UN Council for Namibia, the UN Centre Against Apartheid, and the UN Institute for Namibia in Lusaka, Zambia.

Dr. Sindab had recently been appointed to the Sustainable Communities Task Force of the President's Council on Sustainable Development. She was co-chair of "The Things that Make for Peace: Churches Anti-Violence Network," which facilitates partnerships between gang members and pastors in several cities.

Born Oct. 23, 1944, in Cleveland, Ohio, Nellie Jean Sindab grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y. She earned her bachelor of arts degree *cum laude* in history at Hunter College in 1974; in 1984 she was named to the Hunter College Alumni/ae Hall of Fame.

Dr. Sindab earned her doctorate in political science from Yale University in May 1984. Her two master's degrees, in political science and in international relations, were also from Yale.

She is survived by five sisters—Debra Pitts Ross, Rose Wallace, Martha Andujar, and Susan Gocan, all of New York City, and Sadie Crockett of Dale City, VA—and by several nieces and nephews who were very dear to her.

A funeral service for Dr. Sindab was held on January 12 at The Riverside Church in New York City. A national memorial service, organized by friends and colleagues, will be held in Washington, D.C. at 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 24 at Peoples Congregational Church, 4704 13th Street, NW (13th and Girard). [Additional information is available from the Washington Office on Africa at (202) 546-7961.]

Donations in Dr. Sindab's memory can be made to the Sisana Fund, which she established to care for children in need. Checks to the Sisana Fund should be sent to: Ecumenical Development Initiative, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 915, New York, NY, 10115



Tributes

Office of the Vice President
Washington
January 10, 1996

Dear Ms. Ross, Ms. Wallace, Ms. Andujar, Ms. Gocan, and Ms. Crockett:

I wanted to convey my deep condolences at the passing of your sister, Jean. I didn't know her well but I wish I'd met her earlier. She made a great impact on people in the Administration, who admired the power of her conviction and the generosity of her spirit.

I do recall her role in the first historic Black Church Summit on Environmental Justice in 1993. How could I forget? Jean placed me as a speaker standing immediately next to a representative from Jesus People Against Pollution — a community group with some very specific ideas about what I needed to be doing to right the wrongs they and many others had suffered. What was a Baptist Environmentalist Vice President to say to a demand from a Jesus Person Against Pollution? Jean knew; had us just where she wanted, and she stood back and smiled a smile of deep wisdom.

I remember too a meeting with a number of Cabinet and other senior officials where she argued with a great eloquence that justice and environmental protection were simply two different ways of looking at the sanctity of life. One participant said that what was needed for all these issues was more publicity. She replied quite firmly that what was needed was more soul. The room went very still. I was profoundly moved.

From all accounts, Jean was indeed a great soul. While we only had a few moments together, I do believe I glimpsed bravery and depth, passion and wisdom, in a freedom fighter and comforter. It is very sad when leaders — especially authentic ones from people's movements — fall at moments when we seem to need them so much. I hope you will take comfort in a life so well led, that touched so many, and touched me.

God Bless! Sincerely,
Al Gore

Family Reflections on Nellie Sindab

We, her family and personal friends, were fully cognizant of Jean Sindab's work and place in the society of humankind, and were glad to share our sister, aunt, cousin, godmother and friend with the world. But today we want to share with your our Nellie as she was known by family members and her oldest friends. Jean, who in combatting injustices was continually just going to or returning from New Delhi, Kansas City, Seoul, London, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, Lusaka, Amsterdam, New Orleans, New Zealand — the world, always returned to the place she called home, New York City, and to those relationships she called family. With us, Nellie sought a brief respite from her other world and the struggles for racial, economic, environmental, and social justice; a place for replenishing her spirit, nurturing her soul, and embracing her roots.

Despite being what her nieces and nephews considered the world's most traveling auntie, Nellie actively sustained and cherished family life, often adopting others as family. Her capacity to love so many and each so intensely was simply awesome. A patient and caring counselor, she was always there providing a sage advice, generous practical support and most importantly, spiritual communion. An unfailing supporter and role model, she offered motivation, guidance, and when needed, a lovingly applied nudge. A joyful and spirited companion, she relished life, from quiet walks on beaches and fellowship over meals to gospel music and lively parties. And most importantly, she cared for the children in her life, the nieces, nephews, and godchildren. They eagerly awaited her visits, calls, and postcards. They saw the world through her eyes and stories, and she taught them so much about their own heritage as well as about other places and people. And the children reminded her of the ever-present joy and hope in life.

Yes, we who loved Nellie Jean Sindab as our sister, aunt, godmother and friend, gladly shared her with the world. With you, we mourn the loss of one who dedicated the last twenty-five years of her life to the struggle for social justice. We also mourn the loss of our beloved Nellie. Oh Lord, what a loss!

Tribute from the National Council of Churches Staff Colleagues

Jean Sindab

Living in a world whose rules and wars were set in motion by men, Jean Sindab was a woman devoted to finding another way. When she saw poverty and injustice it was her heart that compelled her to seek a better, different world. When she saw conflict she sought to find a route to meet the deepest needs and yearnings expressed in it.

As an African American she felt the outrage of racism and no person or institution escaped her passionate advocacy. She wanted to give and did give her life for her people. But it was as a woman that she knew in her deepest self the universality of God's purposes and love. She never ceased to fall in love with the miracle of the spirit alive in the great diversity of people. She waited on the church and prayed for the opportunity to address its foolish trivialities and the posturing that prevents it from meeting the challenges of the day. She saw the error in the men she loved and served.

Jean Sindab's vulnerability lay in her constant effort to respond to all those diverse forces and people in whom she could see the pain of life and division. She worked desperately to address warring factions. Sometimes her own warring and conflicted friends tore her apart. Her inner spirit, like Christ's, yearned for the unity of peace and justice, but also for the transforming power of love in human relations. To honor her people, she knew, would mean justice for all.

We give thanks to the Creator whom Jean praised and worshipped for the gift of her life among us.

Ambassador of the Republic of Mozambique

Hipolito Patricio, Ambassador

February 21, 1996

On behalf of President Chissano, my Government and the people of Mozambique, I wish to extend our heartfelt sympathy and solidarity at this time in honor of the late Jean Sindab. We have long known Jean and her work. Her life has been a model of contributing to the struggle of the southern African people and all the world's people who know pain and suffering.

Our sense is that Jean Sindab had been a leader throughout all her life; when she was at Yale University, when she was at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, also when she worked most recently for the National Council of Churches in New York. She was much more than a leader when she served here in Washington as the Director of the Washington Office on Africa during those lean and most difficult years. She was our beacon, and in that sense I salute her life and contributions.

We will always cherish memories of you.



**Embassy of Namibia
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

In Loving Memory of a Great Lady

As difficult as it is to write these words, it is even more difficult to contemplate the world without Jean Sindab.

It seems that an appropriate beginning for our feelings about Jean has to be the words of a song and a familiar saying:

"If I can help somebody, then my living shall not be in vain."
and; "As I walk along in life, let me be of service... let me make a
difference... for I shall not pass this way again."

For us, Jean's life has meant these things and much more. Jean was a truly remarkable woman, and our lives have been touched by her in many ways.

Jean knew both of us separately before we knew each other. At that time, Jackie was working with Jean at the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), and I was Deputy Representative for SWAPO at the United Nations. Ironically, it was Jean's cancellation of her scheduled appointment to speak at Dartmouth College in October of 1985 that brought Jackie and me together for the first time. Jean delegated Jackie to speak at that event while I represented SWAPO at the same conference.

Even now, we still laugh at the memory of mother Jean's stern warning to Jackie about being a young, single woman in the struggle, to beware of men on the prowl. Specifically, she gave a list of men to watch out for, with Asheeke of SWAPO on that list! At the end of the day, we were both pleased that like a true mother, she happily accepted our union and gave us her unreserved blessings.

One of the most important ways Jean touched our lives was not only through her sincere commitment to the struggle for justice in southern Africa, but through her specific commitment to SWAPO and the struggle for National Independence in Namibia.

In spite of differing opinions within the U.S. anti-apartheid movement, she remained steadfast in her belief that Namibia was the "weak link" in the apartheid regime's stranglehold over the southern African region. She strongly believed that political pressure to force the implementation of UN Resolution 435 and programs to educate the public about Namibia should be kept in focus by the Movement. Accordingly, she guided WOA's political actions, educational publications and net-

work organizing toward that goal. It was indeed a happy moment when Namibia's independence became a reality on March 21, 1990. What better affirmation of Jean's insightful political vision is there than this?

In the diplomatic world which is now the focus of our present assignment at the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, we are faced with many exciting challenges. There are indeed many differences between our lives now and six years ago in the National Liberation Movement and in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. One rarely meets individuals with the same conviction and sincerity as Jean.

Jean was always able to easily focus on the real politics at hand. She had the unique ability to see beyond the rhetoric and political pretense of those who tried to distort issues for their own selfish interests.

We admire Jean greatly not only for her sharp and critical mind, but also for the passion with which she espoused her convictions. When Jean was "on a roll" in her presentations, expounding a political point, all that you could say was: "teach, sister Jean... teach."

Jean was definitely a teacher. When she talked, people listened. Whether they agreed or disagreed, took the advice or not; they just had to listen to Jean.

Often, she used to say that she was a "people person". She liked to read people's eyes and try to know what they were thinking. "Look inside," she used to say. "Remember, when people are unhappy with you or with your actions, try to feel what they are feeling. Try to know what they know. Try to see what they see; then, through their eyes you will get some fuzzy image of what's really going on around you."

In our walk through life, what a blessing it would be to make an impact on people the way Jean did. We think that Jean would say in response, that she just "put the lesson out there," it was up to you to learn it or not.

On a personal level, we loved Jean for her caring and support for our success together as a family. She offered valued advice over the years and enjoyed, like a grandmother, our three children, Toivo (7), Mweneni (5) and Martha (3).

In us, Jean will live forever. Even though we miss Jean very much, we celebrate the fullness of her life. We believe that a person lives forever when they are remembered in the words and deeds of those who love them. Definitely, our world is a better place because of Jean Sindab. Her living was not in vain.

May her soul rest in Peace.

Hinyangerwa and Jackie Ashecke

New World Foundation

N. Jean Sindab was a member of New World Foundation's Board for the past three years.

New World Foundation has several "bequest" areas, areas of Foundation concern designated by the Foundation's founder. One bequest area has never been operative for grantmaking: the relationship between the seen and unseen world.

But that area of concern is very much, explicitly and implicitly, how our Board's relations with staff and with each other operate. I mean this is a number of ways; the inspired way in which one set of Board members selects its successors as members rotate off after six years of service.; the almost magical way Board members create the space for themselves and Staff to take risks - in their own work and in supporting the work of grantees - for social justice. Jean was a marvelously generous contributor to these rich relationships. And, equally magical and inspired is the subtle and powerful way in which Board members come to embody the very underpinning of the Foundation - what it is all about. In this sense above all, we at New World Foundation mourn Jean Sindab, and we are Jean Sindab.

Jean came to our Board after many years of courageous and pathbreaking struggles for human rights - in South Africa and around the world. Back home, here in the United States, Jean has been an unbridled force against intolerance and injustice. She lent her strength and standing to the young, and she drew new sparkle and splendor from that commitment. Jean saw environmental protection as another name for the imperative to protect "all of God's creation," and in environmental justice she recognized the call to act, to make things happen, to make things change for the better. She knew change was inevitable; she also knew that the forces most well-positioned to influence its direction rarely conceived of arks big enough for all of us unless pushed to do so by workers, artists, singers, priests, mothers, fathers, children, dreamers - all of us, and all the parts of us.

Jean's big eyes, big smile, and big heart readily conceived that ark - with space enough for all to safeguard it and inhabit it. She saw that ark so clearly that she carried with her the blueprint of the plan for saving it. The essential ingredient in that plan was her resolute understanding that the miracle of survival takes all of us wanting an acting to achieve it.

"All of us" - we are the means and the ends. She knew this and trusted it because she could see so well into the not easily seen. It is because she did this so profoundly that we deeply grieve her passing from us, and we recognize her in the best of ourselves.

Colin Greer, President

United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice

Civil Rights Journal #0106

January 22, 1996

A Farewell to Jean

Someone said it better than I. Our values are misplaced. You hear about the deaths of old sports and entertainment figures who have abused their bodies, but those people who have devoted their lives to justice so that the lives of others might be better get no lines in the newspapers or time on the television.

The world was a better place because Dr. Jean Sindab was in it and some 800 people came to Riverside Church in New York in the middle of a snowstorm to testify to her life of commitment to poor people, to oppressed people, to young people. Young people came, native Americans came, environmental justice advocates came, Southern Africans came and many of her friends and colleagues came to pay tribute to this gentle woman with a uncompromising spirit.

Dr. Jean Sindab was an Africanist, whose love for Mother Africa was central to her own identity. Through her work at the World Council of Churches, she was able to work for the liberation of black people throughout southern Africa and for the eradication of racism the world over.

Through her more recent work at the National Council of Churches, Dr. Sindab became a leading voice in the environmental justice movement. She helped black churches to understand the impact of environmental racism on the lives of their communities, and she clearly understood the link between living in degraded physical environments, mass alienation and destructive violence.

Jean Sindab was also a vocal supporter of our youth and one deeply concerned about the violence which threatens to engulf them. She put together a program called "The Things that Make for Peace" and was an active participant in the Kansas City gang summit.

Jean Sindab died at 51 of breast cancer. Another warrior for justice felled during what should have been the prime of her life. Another frontline casualty in the war against racial, social, and economic injustice.

We seldom talk about the price one pays for being on the frontlines in the battles. We seldom talk about the early deaths, the nervous breakdowns, the health

problems of facing into the winds of injustice and power. But they are clearly there, and we, as a community, need to acknowledge them and then we need to do something about them.

We need to take better care of our leaders. We need to embrace them, to support them, to demand that they take care of themselves physically, mentally and spiritually. We need to encourage our leaders to stop smoking and to find time for exercise in the madness of the world. We need to make sure that our men on the frontlines watch their blood pressure and their diets and have prostate cancer tests. We need to make sure that our women on the frontlines have mammograms.

It seems that I've lost a lot of folks I respect and love to cancer. Indeed, African Americans have the highest overall age adjusted cancer incidence and mortality rate of any group in the U.S. Black women are more likely than white women to die from breast cancer and black men are more likely to die from prostate cancer, for instance.

Cancer, I am told, is a relationship between a host and an invader. There are a number of factors which impact how your body reacts to that invader and clearly heredity, environment, social and nutritional factors all have a part to play in cancer. So do racism and stress.

Being a drum major for justice is full of stress. It mean being sensitive to the plight of those who are oppressed. It means speaking difficult words to power. It means putting your life on the line, in sometimes not-so-obvious ways.

Tell someone you respect, someone who is on the frontlines for justice that you care. Make sure they take care of themselves. We cannot afford to lose many more Jean Sindabs. We can't afford to lose many more drum majors for justice.

Bernice Powell Jackson



Walking humbly — a remembrance of Jean Sindab

Jean's is a remarkable spirit to have dwelled among us. She was totally committed to her community — the African-American community — and to her family. She carried them in her thoughts and emotions wherever and however far she travelled. Yet, she felt a solidarity, a caring for so many others. She always connected to the human-ness of whomever she was dealing with. She was a solid friend: direct, honest and caring in her comments. Despite the difficulties and sorrows of life, she was full of joy. Her warm smile was like a mischievous child's. And was she funny!

As head of the Washington Office on Africa, Jean played a key role in ending US support for apartheid. The times I worked for and with her were a joy — she was someone you learned from, whose criticism and feedback, insight and laughter made one grow.

Memories come crowding around:

- Jean during the first anti-apartheid Peace Tour in 1981, as we crossed the state line into Alabama, shaking her head and saying, " I can't believe I'm in Alabama, my Momma always told me never to come to Alabama!"...
- walking into a rural Alabama black church where local farmers had gathered to hear about South Africa, and ever urban from her Bed-Stuy roots, saying "this will be tough!"...
- Jean sobbing deeply as the choir sings at one of Birmingham's main black churches...
- Jean gathering her energies and papers as she prepares to once again meet a Senator, once again speak truth to power...
- Jean talking excitedly of Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, of its profound importance in giving hope to black youth...
- Jean, poolside in a swimsuit in Harare, Zimbabwe, during a WCC Churches on the Frontline conference, speaking excitedly of her recent meetings with aboriginal groups in Asia...

Jean, each of us, your friends, has unique and special memories of you. But in many ways we hardly knew you... We will miss you. We will remember you. We will tell others of you. In the tradition of your African homeland, we have spilled some beer on the ground for you...

the little girl in your eyes,
determined, smart,
mischievous in the hallways of the powerful...
a smile like a slowly rising sun,
radiant for all the world to see...
depths of sorrow, tough capacity for pain,
leavened by laughter and joy
a deep abiding sense of being accompanied by god
the wholeness of creation so real to you...
a passion for justice, multiplied -
the environment, aboriginal rights,
women,
racial and economic equity...
coming from, standing with and for the poor,
so immensely rich in spirit...
flown away now...
a raindrop marks your passing,
presence...

Carole Collins



MEMORIES OF JEAN SINDAB

I remember being with Jean in Zimbabwe in 1988 for an international conference convened to highlight the tragedy of thousands of children that were being detained in South African jails—many of them were tortured. It was the first major anti-apartheid conference that was attended by large numbers of South Africans, many of whom surreptitiously crossed the border to attend. There were nearly 2,000 people there. Jean was asked to speak at the closing plenary—a great honor to her and to the role of African Americans in the world-wide movement. Many of the great orators of the movement preceded her at the podium. A tough act to follow. But it was Jean that brought the house down. She spoke simply and eloquently and so passionately that every person in the audience was touched and moved to give her a standing ovation.

It is hard to imagine what the international anti-apartheid movement would have been without Jean Sindab. She was such a vital part of it. Whether lobbying Congress, organizing grassroots campaigns or strategizing with activists from other countries.

One of the things that I greatly admired about Jean was that she was an internationalist. There could be no question that she was firmly rooted in the experiences of the oppression suffered by African Americans—African American women. But she was also someone that was able to rise above a parochial view of “our” problems and see the horizon where people of many different experiences of oppression could join forces into a majority. She was a part of the lives and struggles of many different peoples around the world.

Above all else, Jean was genuine and sincere. Jean was the type of person that gave a lot of herself to what she cared about. She was blessed to have both purpose and passion in her life.

At the good-bye party we held for Jean when she moved from Washington to Geneva, I said that when I think of Jean Sindab it calls to mind other great black women of our generation: Ms Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer and Shirley Chisholm. Jean has earned her place among them.

Gay McDougall

International Human Rights Law Group





Tributes from the Washington Office on Africa

Members of the Washington Office on Africa Board of Directors, current and former, will miss Jean Sindab, one of the truly great activists and friends of Africa. However, we celebrate her life and gifts. For three decades Jean inspired, taught, encouraged, and led others in the struggle for freedom in southern Africa, in the U.S. and around the world. As head of The Washington Office on Africa (WOA) in the dark days of apartheid and financial pressures, she helped keep the dream of liberation alive. Through her leadership, WOA became a major player for Africa-related advocacy on Capitol Hill. Jean's leadership, at not only WOA, but at the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, was instrumental in making the global justice links. She joined the struggle for economic justice at home with the struggles of peoples in the South; she connected apartheid in South Africa with the global apartheid of racism, sexism and economic marginalization. In Jean's footsteps we hope to follow, and to continue to learn from her courage and example. We will miss her. May she rest in peace.

Dan Hoffman
President, WOA Board



Jean succeeded me as the Director of the Washington Office on Africa in the summer of 1980. She brought strengths to the office that I did not have and never would have. The fact that she was African American and bright was just the beginning of what she brought.

Her bubbling energy and enthusiasm led her to reach out to others who had not been reached in the struggle against apartheid. Organizations which we had never been able or tried to reach were glad to share in her zeal for African interests. Even though she was fresh from academic studies, her passion for liberation was infectious and intense. It galvanized and mobilized the anti-apartheid movement. No one was a better stump speaker.

She was generous in recognizing the contributions of those of us who had preceded her at the Washington Office on Africa. She organized a spectacular Tenth Anniversary party for WOA that honored those contributions. Her staff were devoted to her.

Her nationalism was not narrow or racist or doctrinaire. It stemmed from her own heritage of Christian faith and love: a love that tries to embrace not only the victims of racism but those who are the victimizers, whether they are insensitive elitists, misguided bigots or outright enemies. She was a disciple of Christ, a beautiful child of the Black Church.

At the same time, she could be confrontational with those friends and allies whom she felt were undercutting the cause of freedom by lukewarm support, bureaucratic indifference, racial or sexist condescension, cynicism or snide remarks. She was confrontational with me more than once but I think we never ceased to be friends.

She never got the support that she needed. Those of us who shared the niggardly financing that marked our times appreciated her downright rage. She would storm out of meetings in ways we never dared to.

She never forgot her roots in "Bed-Stuy". The traumas she and her family had endured there fueled her passion for justice. She never suffered fools gladly. Why should she?

As my artist friend, Freddy Reynolds, would say, she was "SOMETHING ELSE." Her death is a terrible loss, but nothing so good is ever lost forever.

May she rest in peace, and may light perpetually shine upon her.

Ted Lockwood

Executive Director 1972-1980



Dearest Jean,

More than anyone, you helped to alter the course of my life at critical times and in the process we developed one of the closest friendships I've ever had. Your unconditional love, unflinching generosity, supportive criticism and constant praise for things you thought I did well always made me learn more and feel so special. I shall never forget your little cards, notes and early morning phone calls bringing words that always lifted me or made me soar, especially during times when the challenges were greatest. I could never do all that you have done for me. I will miss your laugh.

Your commitment to and passion for the cause of freedom and justice was an example for all of us to live by. I love you and miss you, but your gentle, loving, compassionate spirit is with me and all of us forever.

Danu Smith

Executive Director 1986-1989

My Dear Jean,

A friend and sister to so many — But how will I, personally, remember you? That is much harder to describe. From the day we met, you looked and reached inside of me in a way I've never before tried to articulate. The word "friend" just doesn't seem big enough to match your spirit — nor your spirit's influence on mine. The words "role model" are just not personal enough. And neither description is comprehensive enough to characterize the influence you've had on me. You probably don't remember the day we met, but I remember it quite vividly. I was an undergraduate walking across an often unfamiliar and unsupportive college campus early in a new semester. You were a graduate student Teaching Assistant (TA), responsible for acting as tutor to the undergrads in my political science class. (The first African-American TA I'd encountered there after three years.) "Hey Brother", you said, "aren't you in one of my classes." "Yes", I responded, and anticipating an interrogation for missing two of the first three sessions I quickly went on to make my excuses and to explain how difficult it was so early in the semester given the campaigns of the Black Student Alliance on minority admissions and other issues including the student anti-apartheid coalition. I fully expected you, as the TA, to give me a lecture about my priorities, to remind me of why I'd come to that university in the first place, and to tell me I'd better cut something out. But you didn't — instead



you told me that I had to do both — that it was my responsibility to be both politically active and academically complete — and that in both I had to be thorough and vigorous, comprehensive and meticulous, organized and strategic, dedicated and untiring. After that, you instructed me to come meet with you so that I could brief you on the current projects of the Black Student Alliance and you could brief me on the classes I'd missed, direct me to the most essential readings, and help me to plan both my course and extra-curricular work. I walked away feeling like a battery with a new charge, pondering unusual advice and an atypical offer coming from a TA. In our short and first conversation Jean, I had witnessed so much of your core character. I had, at once, experienced your values, energy, generosity, and camaraderie. I hope your offer was one you never came to regret. Because as you know, I treated it as a lifetime invitation and I took you up on that offer over and over again. And you were always there — with consistent guidance, inspiration, and generosity — with advice for every part-time student job I took, every political campaign, and every postgraduate career move. And then there was WOA — I'm sure you remember those long D.C. to Geneva phone calls — you always seemed to know not just what WOA needed but also what I needed to guide me through the many minefields and to inspire me to carry on. Jean, I only wish I could give you back a fraction of what you've given to me. But I know *well* now what your advice would be, I've know it since that day we met, you'd tell me it is my responsibility to pass on whatever you've given me to someone that comes behind. You imbued my spirit Jean. I wish I had told you so more often while you were here. But you always listened and you always heard and understood far more than I was capable of articulating. That is why I know you are still listening now.

Hamba Kahle My Sister,

Aubrey McCutcheon

Executive Director 1989-1991

I knew of Jean Sindab long before I actually knew her. When I first came to the Washington Office on Africa in 1986 for a 10-month stint the staff was awash with stories of Jean. Jean standing up to Members of Congress, anti-apartheid friends and foes, board members and any others whose actions reflected society's negative



'isms' instead of a prophetic vision. But this passionate "no holds barred" attitude was only one facet of the Jean that I came to know.

A few months into my initial stay I received an unsigned post card which simply read: "*Hang in there! You're doing a great job.*" Not recognizing the handwriting, I checked with co-worker Dorothy Thomas who looked at the card and said, "Oh, that's from Jean, that's a Jean thing." That card and those words capture my most enduring memories of Jean: affirming, encouraging, and enlightening. Not a simple advisor, nor a purveyor of empty or maudlin, sympathetic gestures, Jean's support was meaningful because behind each story, each caution, each recommendation was the statement: "*Girl...I've been there too.*"

The number of African American women whose activism bridges the historically distinct periods of civil rights, black nationalism and international solidarity is very small. And each of those women is precious for their wealth of experience, knowledge, and strength particularly in a world that traditionally doesn't value women of color; a society that frequently even questions our right to exist. To lose a woman, to lose Jean, so early and in a political period where we desperately need leaders of her stature and with her vision is an unquantifiable loss. She is, and will continue to be, deeply missed.

Imani Countess
Executive Director
1992-present

A comrade with whom I struggled to make the world humane and just for the despised, dispossessed and disempowered.

A mentor who believed in me, even when I doubted my abilities.

A friend with whom I freely shared sorrow, joy, hopes and fears.

For these things I say, "Thank you, my sister." Everyday I will strive to live my life as you lived yours - with a singular commitment to social change and justice, both at home and abroad.

Lisa Crooms
1984-1986



I first met Jean in the summer of 1981 when I worked as an intern at the Washington Office on Africa. Little did I realize what a profound impact that encounter would have on my life. Jean's passionate commitment to justice and her ability to draw connections between issues of race and class in the US and in southern Africa made her a powerful speaker and mobilizer. At the same time, her irrepressible sense of humor and her skills as a consummate storyteller made her a wonderful friend and mentor. Jean instilled in me, as she did in so many others, an abiding concern for Africa.

I was honored when Jean asked me to return to WOA four years later, at the height of the campaign for South African sanctions. As usual, there was always too much to do, but Jean inspired her staff to tackle each new challenge. Jean operated family-style, with an enormous heart and a fierce loyalty that required just as much love and dedication in return. I never ceased to be impressed by her energy, her courage, and her sense of purpose. When it came to isolating apartheid, Jean would brook no compromise.

The last time I saw Jean was in Geneva, where she was working for the World Council of Churches. I had gone to do some academic work and, with typical generosity, she invited me to stay with her. I was probably not the ideal houseguest. I was discouraged with my research, questioning my abilities, and ready to abandon my thesis. Jean had been there. Her compassionate counsel and sage advice got me back on track and helped me to complete that process.

Jean had a gift for helping people to see a way ahead—and for equipping them for the journey. By her example, she continues to lead us forward.

Douglas Tilton

1981, 1985-1986, 1995 to present

I had the honor of working closely with Jean Sindab for four years at the Washington Office on Africa in the early Eighties. When I first started at the Washington Office, Jean and I were the only staff people, working in cramped quarters on a shoestring budget. Under her direction, the organization grew in size and stature and served as an important leader in the anti-apartheid movement. In those days the eradication of apartheid in South Africa and Namibian independence seemed very remote indeed, but Jean looked to the future optimistically and threw her heart and soul into the freedom struggle.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. liked to quote the abolitionist preacher Theodore Parker who said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Each of us has the ability to shorten that arc and help improve the human condition through our actions. Jean did just that. Despite the obstacles that she confronted, Jean never lost her commitment to the struggle for justice and she never lost her humanity. During her life, so tragically cut short, she made a real difference in people's lives and made the world a better place. Because of Jean, the arc of the moral universe is that much shorter and we who knew her and many, many more who didn't are the beneficiaries of her life's work.

Kenneth S. Zinn
1981-1985

February 16, 1996

Jean, you will always hold a special place in my heart. I still remember vividly the first day we met. I was interviewing for the position as Washington Office on Africa's Office Manager. We *immediately* "clicked!" Since that date sixteen years ago, you have always held a special place in my heart. You have truly been a role model for me, someone to emulate and look up to. Although it is usually months and sometimes years when we have not seen each other in the flesh or spoken on the phone, our connection has never been broken.

I know we will continue to communicate now, although not in the flesh, but in the spirit. You have touched my life, as you have so many others, and for that I am eternally blessed.

As libation poured to our enlightened ancestors - our sister-warriors such as Queen Nzinga, Queen Yaa Asantewa, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune and Fannie Lou Hamer; you Jean Sindab, have now joined their esteemed company and will forever have an impact on our lives. Medasi (thank you) for the time you shared with us.

Love Always,
Nkechi Taija
1980-1983



To me, Jean has always been a person who sees what other people cannot — or do not — want to see about themselves and about the world. My first experience of this envisioning or visionary quality of hers was intensely personal. We met in 1985 at the World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya. From almost the first instant, I felt she saw me and at the same time, saw right through me. Forever after, I always felt that she expected more from me than I ever envisioned for myself. In this sense, it was a profound personal pleasure to know and be known by her and a constant political challenge. It was never just a question of who one was, but also of what one was doing and beyond that, what ultimately needed to be done.

Still, for all the precision of Jean's vision, what I will carry with me forever is the generosity of spirit and sense of humor that accompanied it. She was a human rights activist in the most profoundly human sense, finding endless possibility where others might find none at all. Her life will be a life-long reminder that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Dorothy Thomas

1985-1987

I remember Jean for her faith. She relied on her faith in God to give her the strength to stand up and speak out. I remember on occasion her stopping in chapels before meetings for a moment of prayer. There were many times — too many times — in her personal life when she needed to call on this source of strength. The stories she told of surviving on only Jello for days when she began her graduate studies stick with me vividly. I remember, too, and the depths of anguish that she felt when her mother died, like Jean, in her early 50s. Jean always was able to climb back out of these dark times to find a way to continue to make her unique contribution.

I remember Jean for her courage. It was not easy for Jean to find her place in the anti-apartheid movement when she came to Washington to lead the Washington Office on Africa in 1981. By force of her commitment and strength, she kept the Office going and maintained its financial viability. While working for liberation in southern Africa, Jean's commitment to the struggles in her own African American community grew. We have this to thank her for. She also continued to believe that there was a role for European Americans in these struggles for justice, and she made



herself a bridge between blacks and whites. We have this to thank her for, too. Holding firm in both of these beliefs in our fractured society takes no small amount of courage.

I remember Jean for her openness. She was willing to teach me things that I needed to know. She was willing to let me in on some of her experiences as an African American. She gave me the opportunity to gain perspective that I would not have had access to without her. She was a model of perseverance for me.

I remember Jean for her love. Jean was a perceptive and caring friend. And Jean was a loving sister and aunt.

I feel so fortunate to have known Jean. The world needs more people like Jean - people who have a mixture of faith, courage, and love. Truly, it is a tragedy that we lost her so soon.

Christine Root
1972-1981

In the summer of 1983 I was placed as an intern in the Washington Office on Africa by the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Dr. Jean Sindab was then Director of WOA, and it was under her leadership that the next two and one-half years became for me a foundational educational experience, one which my undergraduate education had not provided and one which established an ideal toward which I could aspire in graduate school. Because of Jean's leadership, her ability to put together a staff of dedicated activists and to maintain the important work which the office was doing, I stayed on at WOA past my summer internship working as Network Organizer. The example which Jean set, the way in which she used her education to contribute to struggles for justice and human rights, is one which set the course for my future. Even today as a college professor, I try to emulate Jean's example and maintain the political relevance of my teaching and writing. In many ways my forthcoming book, *Working Alliances*, is a tribute to Jean and my other colleagues at the Washington Office on Africa Jacqueline Wilson Asheeke, Lisa Crooms, Randy Nunnelee, and Kenneth Zinn for the work that we did and what we gave to each other. We will miss Jean very much.

Janet R. Jakobsen, Ph.D.
1983-1985

DEDICATION

Dr. Jean Sindab, Director of Environmental and Economic Justice/Hunger Concerns for the National Council of Churches and a member of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, passed away on January 8, after a long and hard battle with cancer. Those of us who knew her well are deeply saddened by our loss. In reflecting upon Jean's life, we realized that this report attempts to speak to some of the issues at the very core of her life's work. For example, she and I worked on developing an Urban Strategies Initiative for the National Council of Churches in the wake of events in South Central Los Angeles. She organized the Black Church Network on Environment and Economic Justice.

Jean chose to serve on the Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee because of her interest in the job creation aspects of the brownfields issue. Her passion was the plight of inner city youth, and she clearly understood the linkages between living in degraded physical environments, mass alienation, and destructive violence. It can be said that her life's work was dedicated to the constant search for authentic signs of hope. Many formative concepts behind this report germinated during our discussions years before the establishment of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. Jean struggled mightily to attend all the NEJAC "Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields." She especially liked the idea of "Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities." Despite her illness, she was able to attend our Public Dialogue in Boston, and we were indeed graced by her presence.

We believe that the vision which this report hopes to articulate is one she embraced and dedicated her life to help realize. She helped me to formulate the question which pervades this report: Can the restoration of the physical environment become an anchoring point for economic, social, cultural, and spiritual renewal? In very real sense, she contributed to this report in ways she may never know. Therefore, we dedicate this report to the "living" memory of the life and work of Dr. Jean Sindab.

Charles Lee

Dedication of Environmental Justice, Urban Revitalization and Brownfields: The Search for Authentic Signs of Hope, The Report of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council Public Dialogues on "Urban Revitalization and Brownfields: Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities".



Jean and I

Neither one of us was who we were going to be. When we met.

Back then in 1971, life seemed to be unveiling a panoply of possibility. I'd left a reporting job and a husband in Indianapolis to make a career in publishing. Landed at Time-Life Books. Thank God for Affirmative Action. And there were new black folks for me to meet. All of us aspiring. Heads and hearts filled with courage, fantasies, and fables.

But not Jean. But then who's to say. She always just seemed to be more grounded in reality. At the time, we were upwardly mobile book researchers and writers - our second job out of college-looking forward to the next shrimp party, becoming a Time-Life writer with a corner office, and a brownstone on Convent Avenue. And the opportunity to see Superfly on our lunch hour or party for three hour at lunch time in the lobby restaurant La Fonda Del Sol.

Jean was the secretary outside a corner office. From Brownsville. She let us know that Brownsville was a place with few exits and a reputation that necessitated escape. In the mornings she was at Hunter College. That's when I first heard about TAP grants and the realities of a peer putting herself through school by day -at 26 years of age- by working afternoons. With us.

She told stories. Was outrageous in her tales of travails with menfolk. Of lives I'd never glimpsed. She was remaking herself the way we must never stop doing. Meeting new challenges requires reinventing ourselves. Two years later, we were proud and happy with Jean as she announced her upcoming graduation and that she was applying for a fellowship to Yale. To study International Relations and Africa. She was not then what she was to become. She had a plan.

I was living in Puerto Rico some months later having flippantly left Time-Life , its shrimp parties and photographers, to explore the Caribbean by working at a San Juan newspaper. Found out Jean won the fellowship. Wish I had been there to celebrate with the gang.

But I was there when she graduated from Yale. The Time-Life gang was there: me, Angela, Beverly and Vivian. Achievement was what we expected. Though it could prove to be elusive. AS she moved on, we dined on tales of the Washington Office on Africa , and then tales of the 'Swiss Alps' and the United Nations.

Then one day she was back. I looked up at the Jesse Jackson '88 bus-and there Jean was disembarking at our west 72nd street rally as Jesse's advisor on Africa. That day I introduced her to Vernice, told her about the organization that we had founded, West Harlem Environmental Action. Told Jean about our work on environmental

racism. She was clearly moved. She "got it" at once. She showed a profound interest. As her mind took in what I said she was already forming an analysis of connectedness of issues, of spirituality, of the condition of our folks.

Then one day soon she was truly back to stay in New York City. And she was offering to help me organize ministers in my campaign for the State Assembly. So it was at a Sunday morning service when Jean, Vernice, Valerie and I went to Canaan Baptist Church for me to receive Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker's endorsement that Jean joined Canaan Baptist Church. And she also moved uptown.

Then in a nexus that would have been hard to imagine in '71, she was hired by the National Council of Churches and became an integral part of the national environmental justice movement. Who would have thought that two so different would meet again in reinvented lives.

Again, her life became to me a blur of activity, of firm persuasion, of steadfastness, of singular vision. Jean was a joy and a privilege. And we met once again, finally, as we were to be.

*by Peggy M. Shepard
West Harlem Environmental Action*

We, in the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice, salute the life and work of Jean Sindab. Jean was nothing short of a trail-blazer for justice whose work exemplified one whose actions are guided and directed by uncompromising commitment. The impacts of her struggle for social justice have been and will continue to be felt within our movement for environmental justice in this country and on the African continent in the struggle for human rights. She was tireless and above all principally dedicated. Jean understood that the way in which we struggle must reflect and clearly express the vision that we have for the world. We sorely miss her.

*Co-chairs, Anne Braden and
Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth
Connie Tucker, Executive Director
Southern Organizing Committee
for Economic and Social Justice*



Mozambique Solidarity Office

Though we cannot be there with you at the Peoples Church, we will be there in spirit and, more importantly, will continue working on the issues and standing by the convictions that Jean Sindab represented. We are also sending one hundred dollars to the Sisana Fund.

A luta continua!

Prexy Nexbitt
Jenny Dahlstein
Karin Candeloria
Heeten Kalan



A REMEMBRANCE OF JEAN...

My memories of Jean Sindab are filled with smiles, laughter, passion, commitment, long meetings, and an unshakable belief that we could create a more equitable world. How thrilled she was to come meet us in 1984. All the way from Geneva, Switzerland to Oakland, California, as she said, "to see real people fighting racism"!!

Jean was outspoken, gutsy, caring, conscious that race counts, but color blind in her relationship to all of us. I miss her greatly, but am renewed in her spirit and the sense that she is very much still with us.

Peggy Saika
Asian Pacific Environmental Network

MOSES

For Jean Sindab and Mary O'Brien

Struggle for a world of justice
Voices inside and out
seek that perfect paradise
not the one we deride and shout against.
Scream to the wind.
O rage and desperation.
Age appears our enemy.
(Remember five are born into such light.)
Mother Martin King came to me
Yes to set me free to walk with white children, no boot on my neck.
Now I feel so weak with opportunity.
(We are given another chance.)
Fathers Harriet, Sojourner, and Rosa each broke the tablets.
The tokens, and the commandments.
They took public transportation until it was taken away.
(God parts a sea for each of us,
Stems its flow until the water breaks.)
We are freed into a desert of painful memories,
Not least of which is light.
It's bright, its reflections too strong, we wander
and wait for night.
The waiting, the time, forty years of this and more...
But after the light, the sea, the desert, and the chance,
Moses loved, angry with us, humble with time.
It came, and Moses watched as the chaos slipped behind.

Michel Gelobter

New York, February 6, 1996

IN LOVING MEMORIES OF DR. JEAN SINDAB

Dr. Jean Sindab memories and love we shared, will always be cherished. She added a special touch of godly love as a friend and sister. To me, she was, is, and shall always be treasured in my heart as a dear friend. I can never forget the love and concern shared, the glow on her face, and the big smile she had at the National Council of Churches Conference in 1993. That event to me, was one of the best historical moments of my life. And today, I am truly grateful that I had the opportunity of meeting such a great person. Dr. Sindab contributed one of the greatest inspirations to this environmental justice movement for me in Columbia, MS struggle for environmental justice from the spiritual perspective. As for me, her love, work, and smile will always be remembered and cherished in my heart.

Charlotte L. Keys



IN MEMORY OF DR. JEAN SINDAB

I did not know Jean well, but I do know well what Jean stood for – peace, justice, and equality. Jean and I met briefly only a few years ago, but the impression she left with me of who she was is lasting: a woman of gentleness, sincerity, kindness and concern.

May all of us who share Jean's dreams continue our work to make them come true.

Beverly Patterson Johnson

Member, Northeast Environmental Justice

Network; and Associate Director for

Administration, the Massachusetts Toxics

Use Reduction Institute,

Lowell, Massachusetts



IN MEMORY OF DR. JEAN SINDAB

“Those who fight to make the people free, who suffer in poverty and misery to defend a great truth are heroes.

Those who fight for ambition, to enslave another people, to extend their power, to seize another's land, are not heroes, but criminals.”

—Jose Marti

With Love,

the Southwest Network for

Environmental and Economic Justice

WINS Religion Commentary

The Death of a Friend

Sunday, January 14, 1996

A friend died here last Monday, right in the middle of the storm, after a year-long struggle against cancer. Her name was Jean — Jean Sindab and she was the Director for Environmental and Economic Justice/Hunger concerns at the National Council of Churches. She also, over an incredibly productive life of only 51 years, was the Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches' program to combat racism. She convened women from every continent to address the double burden of racism and sexism and organized a major ecumenical consultation on the needs of indigenous people worldwide. And much, much more. The most vivid memory I have of her is of a bubbling sense of enthusiasm she just couldn't contain as she described how a campaign she helped organize through churches in a number of cities across the country was rescuing young people from gangs. She had been there on the streets with those turning their lives around and knew the danger of gunshots fired in retribution. But knowing that some people's lives were changed for the better made her so happy she just couldn't contain her delight. May all of us learn from saints like this what it means to be there for others just when they need us most. Bless you, Jean.

Roy Lloyd



Welcome Home Jean Sindab. We greatly appreciate your efforts in helping communities around the world "Imagine", but also to begin to rebuild their communities.

Irish Settles

Environmental, Organizer

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

IMAGINE!

A village with a family feeling

A welcome home where we get some healing

A place to drink juice or herbal tea

With a theme of the month for all to see

A home for our village where people can play
And the rhythm of the seasons will mark each day
Where children will learn about their rights
And find a place where there are no fights

Where we meet in a circle and go around
And everyone's voice can find its sound
Where we find a new way that comes from the heart
With an inclusive process right from the start

Where we respect one another and honor the earth
And all our relations through death and rebirth
A place where we help each other be strong
A place where we learn to change what's wrong

A place where we come to get involved
Where neighborhood problems can get resolved
With popular theater and cabaret
We'll show the world what we have to say

A place where we sing and dance together
Where festivals happen in inclement weather
Where people do yoga, aerobics, tai chi
And paint the pictures they want to see

Where everyone learns, regardless of age
And original plays are performed on the stage
Where fundraisers happen about every week
We'll work to help groups with the funding they seek

Where good food will be served in family style
And people will linger around for awhile
A place where our spirits can freely roam
A place where we all can say. Welcome home!"



HAMBA KAHLE COMRADE SINDAB!

In those trying times your smile comforted us. Your laughter reassured us. And your wise words of wisdom — anecdotal in most cases — guided us. Your experiences taught us and your quiet gestures paved our paths. You gave light where there was sorrow and you provided encouragement when there was fear and hesitation. I still see your helping hand reaching out, saying “we can do it!”

Your modesty grounded you and your principles moved you. Your silent words, I will never forget. Your insights, I will embody. Your cause, I will share. Your spirit, I will pass on.

Hamba Kahle Comrade Sister! - Go Well.

Heeten Kalan



Jean, your quiet and supportive spirit will continue to live in those whose lives you touched. Thank you for sharing your kind and beautiful spirit with us.

With warmest regards and bidding you a fond farewell,

*Adjoa A. Aiyetoro, Director
National Conference of Black Lawyers*



Sister Jean Sindab was a good friend of ours in the Southwest. Compañera, you gave your life so that we would all be free. Compañera Jean Sindab. ¡Presente!

Hermana Jean Sindab fue una buena amiga de nosotros en el Suroeste. Compañera, has dado tu vida para que nosotros pudiéramos vivir en libertad. Compañera Jean Sindab. ¡Presente!

*Jeanne Gauna
Southwest Organizing Project*

In Memory of Jean...

The Southern African Support Project (SASP) mourns the loss of our sister in the struggle for human rights. Her belief in the impossible, her sense of humor, and her energetic spirit will be sorely missed as we meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Despite Jean's tremendous workload as Director of the Washington Office on Africa, she was always willing to help us in organizing material aid for refugees in southern Africa and participate in our campaigns to raise public consciousness against U.S. foreign policy. Whether we asked her to join us in a picket line, attend a gospel show, chaperone a youth dance-a-thon, or co-host a radio program, she enthusiastically joined our programs. Jean did not limit her role in the struggle to only her organization's work. She valued the work of many organizations as a collective strike against injustice!

Her ability to work in coalitions was just one of her treasured strengths. We will miss her.

*Past and Present Members of
The Southern African Support Project*



January 10, 1996

On behalf of the Minnesota Council of Churches please pass along our gratitude for Jean's ministry to us, with us, and among us. We give thanks for her life even as we mourn her death.

*Peg Chamberlin
Minnesota Council of Churches*



January 11, 1996

On behalf of the New Mexico Conference of Churches, as well as the wider network of local and regional ecumenical organizations we give thanks to Jean for her courageous, yet hospitable witness and ministry.

*Wallace Ford
Albuquerque, NM*

January 11, 1996

With great sadness, on behalf of the 450 members of the National Network of Grantmakers, we send our condolences and sympathy upon learning of the passing of Jean Sindab. Her spirit and energy will live on in the work she pioneered. For countless years, Jean was a leader among our group of progressive Interfaith Funders. We also know her as a true visionary who linked environmental and economic justice issues, as well as a spokesperson who never failed to advocate for youth. We will miss Jean as a person, her dedication and warmth, but remain committed to her causes.

*Terry Odendahl, Executive Director
National Network of Grantmakers*



Indianapolis, IN

January 29, 1996

I am writing this letter to express my sorrow for the loss of your family member and friend. I am a friend of Jean's — we met in 1971 while she was working at Time, Inc., and I was about to enter medical school. We have shared many things together and supported each other through many of life's experiences. I am also a breast cancer doctor at Indiana University and felt proud that I was able to discuss many of the concerns that Jean had about her breast cancer. I am very sorry that we, as breast cancer doctors, have such a long way to travel in this field before we can provide the type of treatment which will change the course of a very bad disease.

I am sorry that I was not able to attend the services for Jean. My thoughts and prayers are with you. I miss her so much. On January 16, I presented a summary of Jean's breast cancer case to my medical students as a tribute to her — I did not of course use her name, but I think she would have liked this since we talked about my research in trying to have more African-American women in breast cancer studies so that we can ask some very important questions about any differences there might be for our women.

If there is anything that I can do to assist you, please contact me.

*Worta McCaskill-Stevens and son, Saleh Stevens
Indiana University Medical Center*

To Jean:

A quiet, courageous, gentle, strong queen mother Warrior, always teaching, always smiling, always visioning. From humble soul beginnings, God allowed her to spring forth a mighty fountain of service resisting with every ounce of spirit flood tyranny in any form, yet always ready for a renaissance of kind acts. Anchored in the Most High, delivering examples of how to be never overbearing, but highly disciplined to the task. A quiet, courageous, gentle, strong sista ever ready for a TRUTH cause always there with a open heart, a clear mind, and a willing body.

From the shores of Africa to the streets of America, Queen Warrior Jean Sindab stood tall, gallant, forceful, gentle and ever loving and serving her People and her God.

*Dr. Mildred McClain, Executive Director
Citizens for Environmental Justice*



Please express my deepest sympathy to the family of Dr. Jean Sindab. I did not know she was ill, and I am shocked to hear of her death. She has made a remarkable contribution to the cause of justice in which she has given her life. I pray her family and the many others who cared so much for Jean will feel God's comfort just now.

*Donald E. Miller, General Secretary
Church of the Brethren General Board*



January 8, 1996

I write to express deep sympathy and profound concern for you as you mourn the loss of Jean and celebrate her life with you. How does one measure both grief and gratitude?

In my own tradition, (the Moravian Church), we say of one who dies that "she was called into the more immediate presence of the Saviour." May you also experience Christian triumph along with human sorrow and loss.

Your family is upheld in my prayers.

*Gordon Sommers,
Immediate Past President
National Council of Churches*

January 21, 1996

Nine years ago, shortly after arriving in Geneva, I first encountered Jean. It was at the baptism of the son of an exiled South African couple. The priest asked whether anyone wanted to say a few words, and she was the first to stand. As she spoke from her heart and soul of his parents' struggle and of his great journey ahead, I wondered who was this African-American in Switzerland, so full of fire, and what she was doing there. It didn't take me long to find out: I was an intern at the World Council of Churches' communications department, and Jean came looking for me one day to complement my writing. In no time flat, she helped me strategize to find funding to attend an historic WCC meeting of Southern African liberation movements in Lusaka — no mean feat, given my lowly status as an intern. Jean then took on the personnel department and orchestrated for me to work with her in the Programme to Combat Racism. From that point on, she never ceased helping me to break down the doors of racism, sexism, and intolerance that I encountered. She became my friend, mentor, sister, confidant, and advisor.

We all know of Jean's dedication to the public concerns of global and national racism, human rights, justice and peace. Yet it may not be as widely known that she was somehow able to make unlimited space in her life to give primacy to the private struggles and simple, ordinary concerns of so many everyday people. In particular, she had profound and lasting influence in shaping the lives of many young women of all races and walks of life. I am humbled that Jean made me a part of her life, and found the time to be there for me, physically and spiritually, at every milestone and juncture. I am filled with pride at the words of the last letter she wrote to me: "I love you and I am so proud and happy for the way your life is moving forward." Well, Jean, that is thanks, in a large part, to you.

Marie-Elena John Smith
Heritage Services, Inc.



On behalf of the staff and board at the Peace Development Fund, where Jean was a board member, I would like to extend our deep, deep sympathies to you and your family. Jean was a most valued Board member — open, wise, funny, perceptive, dynamic, determined and loving. She was a great bridge between communities and a model to us all. We will miss her keenly and cannot even imagine the sadness you might be feeling.

Jenny Ladd
Peace Development Fund

Tribute to Jean Sindab:

Jean Sindab possessed the brilliance, tenacity, drive and clear witness of a prophet in her own time. Yet, Jean will be remembered beyond her own time because her witness was not to herself but to greater truths that called for moral courage in immoral days and ethical clarity among a people whose vision had dulled. The communities of conscience offer our thanks and celebrate the life-force known as Jean Sindab — now walking in other worlds but not absent from us.

Dr. Thom White Wolf Fassett,

General Secretary

General Board of Church and Society

The United Methodist Church



January 21, 1996

By her last years, Jean's life, love and work embraced the whole world. That is one way, at least, to think of her efforts in the struggle for environmental justice. As a staff member of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment — as much as Jean could ever be "staff"; she was just *movement* with periodically changing bases — Jean wove together social justice and ecology, science and religion, awe at the splendor of God's creation, pain at its peril. Call it what you will, by the end of her own life, Jean's cause had become Life itself, all of it.

She talked about climate change. *Climate change?!.* From Brooklyn to Yale to Geneva to Johannesburg, Jean had been changing climates enough for one lifetime. It was the whole planet now. Environmental justice? How about taking gang members to a community garden and seeing what the conversation might be like on God's ground, not someone's concrete; it softened, she said. Black churches! Remember "green pastures." In a White House meeting of senior administration officials, when she was asked what was really needed — I forget for what — she replied, "More soul," and went eye to eye around the whole room.

I'm just one guy, among thousands she touched, across age, gender, and race. I can't get her out of my mind, she's so deep down in my heart.

Paul Gorman, Executive Director

National Religious Partnership for the Environment

Dearest Jean,

What an angel you have been to me. It's wonderful to know you are on my shoulder along with those who guide me best. The Creator sees through you. We're going to Seattle' and know you'll be with us all the way.

Un abrazo,

Nina Laboy

South Bronx, New York City

P.S. I came to know her very late. Very late in her life on earth. I will love her always. I keep thinking of a poem/song which was a collaboration between Federico Garcia Llorca and Langston Hughes:

If I die
Keep the balcony door open
I can see a little boy eating an orange
From my balcony
I can hear the sound of the reapers reaping their wheat
From my balcony
If I die
Keep the balcony door open
If I die
Keep the balcony door
open
Open
If
I
Die...



Jean Sindab Memorial Committee

Dana Alston

Gail Christopher

Cecelie Counts Blakey

Acie Byrd

Imani Countess

Lisa Crooms

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