

BEYOND CRIME AND PUNISHMENT BIOS 2

Joyce Hobson Johnson began her community activism and leadership as a high school student in Richmond, VA, during the 1960s struggle for civil rights and open accommodations. She deepened her involvement at Duke University, where she was founding co-chair of the Duke Afro-American Society; a leader in the movement for relevant education; and an advocate for non-academic, campus employees. Johnson was actively engaged in the Durham community with a variety of civil rights initiatives, worker justice struggles, tutoring projects, and local church activities.

A former business professor and transportation research director at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro for 27 years, Johnson currently serves as a co-chair of the National Council of Elders, which includes leaders of social justice movements of the 20th century. She is also Director of the Jubilee Institute at the Beloved Community Center, a community organizing, leadership development, research, and advocacy entity.

With her husband, the Reverend Nelson Johnson, and others, Johnson established the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Process. Influenced by international models such as the South African process, this initiative encourages broad community dialogue, truth-telling, understanding, and healing throughout Greensboro in pursuit of economic, racial, and social justice and equity. Currently immersed in the implementation phase of that work, entitled “Our Democratic Mission,” Johnson and her husband have received numerous awards for their innovative and inclusive approach to community-building, including the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World Award, the National Faith and Politics Institute’s St. Joseph Day Award, the Encore Career’s Purpose Prize, and the North Carolina A&T State University’s Human Rights Award. The Johnsons have two adult daughters and two grandchildren.

Reverend Nelson Johnson has been active in the movement for social and economic justice since high school in the late 1950’s. He served as a local and national student leader including Chairperson of the National Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) and Vice President of the SGA at A&T State University, in Greensboro, NC in 1970. Between high school and college Rev. Johnson served four years in the United States Air Force. He continues to work for social and economic justice in Greensboro as Pastor of Faith Community Church and Executive Director of The Beloved Community Center of Greensboro.

Though involved in a myriad of initiatives, Rev. Johnson centers his efforts on facilitating a process of comprehensive community building, which include a convergence of racial and ethnic diversity, social and economic justice, genuine participatory democracy, and healing and reconciliation. At the Beloved Community Center, he and his colleagues attempt to bring together the homeless, the imprisoned, impoverished neighborhoods, and other disenfranchised groups in the spirit of mutual support and community.

Guided by his three-part emphasis of diversity, justice and democracy, Rev. Johnson is actively building relationships with and providing leadership within organized labor, faith groups and other public and private community organizations. He and other local ministers of the

Greensboro Pulpit Forum led an active support effort (1993-96) that resulted in a significant contract settlement for workers at the Greensboro K-Mart Distribution Center. Based on the success of that initiative in “community unionism,” Rev. Johnson also spearheaded statewide support for the Justice at Smithfield Workers Struggle, and the ongoing struggle of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) in NC.

Rev. Johnson served as Co-Chairperson of Interfaith Worker Justice, based in Chicago, and was a member of the US Justice Department’s Public Review Board for UNITE-HERE. He is currently a member of the Ethics Committee for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Vice-President of the Greensboro Pulpit Forum, a citywide alliance of Christian clergy. He is a member of the National Council of Elders and the Mel King CoLab Fellows at MIT. Rev. Johnson is a member of the Greensboro NAACP Executive Committee and was among the first group of 17 to be arrested in the North Carolina Forward Together - Moral Monday campaign and continues to help provide leadership to that pacesetting, innovative effort.

Because of his extensive experience in community organizing and socio-political analysis, Rev. Johnson is routinely invited to speak on university campuses around the country to share his vision of community building. He has written articles for the *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Labor and Employment Law* and *The Witness Magazine*, published by the National Episcopal Church. Rev. Johnson is also a former Contributing Editor for the *Black Scholar Magazine*, National Chair and Contributing Editor for the *African World Newspaper*, and Assistant Editor for the *Carolina Peacemaker of Greensboro, NC*.

One of the most challenging and transforming events in the Rev. Johnson’s life was the tragic killings of five labor and community organizers, the wounding of ten others and the terrorizing of the African American Community at an Anti-Klan rally in 1979. That incident gave rise to the first Truth and Community Reconciliation Process of its kind in the United States, for which Rev. Johnson served as the primary visionary and organizer. Initiated in 2001, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Process has received national and international recognition, including the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World Award and the Faith and Politics Institute of Washington, DC’s “Beloved Community Award.” Rev. Johnson has also been recognized by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu for his visionary leadership.

Awards received include the Bennett College Human Relations Award, the National NAACP Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights Award, the Greensboro NAACP John B. Ervin Service Award, the National AFL-CIO Faith Leader Award, the Greensboro Human Relations Service Award, the University of Massachusetts Labor Relations and Research Center Robert Haynes Award, the North Carolina A&T State University Human Rights award and many others.

Rev. Johnson is a native of Halifax County, NC. He received a baccalaureate degree in political science from **North Carolina A&T State University** and a Master of Divinity Degree from the **School of Theology at Virginia Union University**. He is married to Joyce Hobson Johnson, a retired research director and School of Business and Economics faculty member at A&T who now works side by side with Johnson at the BCC. The Johnsons have two adult daughters, Ayo Samori Johnson, a registered nurse and certified recreational therapist, and Akua Johnson-Matherson (John), a university administrator. Rev. Johnson and Joyce are also the proud

grandparents of three granddaughters, Alise, Imani and Nia Matherson, and one grandson, Nelson Josiah Johnson.

Esther Attean is a Co-Director of Maine-Wabanaki REACH. A Passamaquoddy Tribal citizen, she holds an MSW from the University of Maine. She came to the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine ten years ago to work with young people in their transition out of foster care. For seven years prior, she worked for the Penobscot Nation Department of Human Services, providing family support and community program development services. Esther was part of the Indian Child Welfare Act Training Workgroup and helped create and convene the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She now helps direct community organizing for Maine-Wabanaki REACH.

Denise Altvater works for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as director of the Wabanaki Youth Program in Maine. She has created a supportive web of connection and communication in a region where Native communities have been isolated and often powerless for decades. Countless native youth have benefitted from her tireless commitment, and nonjudgmental support and love. As one of the original group that conceptualized and established the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, Denise has bravely shared her story, which has increased understanding of the journey from trauma to healing to best support those impacted by the TRC process.

Denise sits on the Board of Overseers for the Maine State Prison in Warren, including the Bolduc facility.