

Coalition members pay tribute to John Washburn, former Convener of the American NGO Coalition for the ICC



Former AMICC Convener, John Washburn at ASP8 © Coalition for the ICC

We are saddened to learn of the passing of John L. Washburn. John was an extraordinary person, a true public servant and a tireless advocate for positive US engagement with the International Criminal Court. John was instrumental in the establishment of the Washington Working Group on the ICC (WICC) and acted as its Co-Chair for many years. John's leadership advocating for US support for international criminal justice is unmatched. He had a commanding and compassionate presence in everything from his engagement with senior UN and government officials to his grassroots engagement with Americans across the country.

John had an inspiring career and incredible stories to share. He began his career in the Foreign Service and held the post of Night Shift Chair of the Iran Hostage Task Force in 1979, for which he received a special commendation from the Secretary of State for this service. John also served within the United Nations, including as a Director in the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General from 1988-93.

Thereafter, he pursued his passion for human rights by helping to establish and promote the ICC. As a founding member of the international NGO coalition for the ICC, he participated in

the 1998 conference that adopted the Rome Statute, chairing the committee that wrote the sections on crimes against women. Later, John was Convener for the American Coalition for the ICC (AMICC).

Those of us who continue the WICC follow in his footsteps and owe him a tremendous debt. When we learned of his passing, many of us reflected on the mentoring relationships we shared with John. John was incredibly kind and touched the lives and careers of so many. He brought out the best in those around him, supported our strengths, and provided experiences that shaped many of our careers.

We send our sincerest condolences to John's family and friends. We miss him dearly and will continue to carry on his legacy.

Veronica Glick & Rebecca Shoot

Conveners of the Washington Working Group on the International Criminal Court

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court endorses this statement

WICC members and friends shared the following:

- John was a leading advocate for global justice and tirelessly committed to a universal International Criminal Court, including, one day, seeing the United States join as a state party. The Coalition for the ICC remembers John's clarity of vision, his kindness, his insightful analysis, and his courage. We share our deepest condolences with John's family and friends. - Melinda Reed, Acting Convener of the Coalition for the ICC
- John worked tirelessly for the US to renew its historic leadership in international criminal justice by providing necessary support and assistance to the ICC. He will be sorely missed. – Ambassador Stephen Rapp, Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues, 2009-2015
- John Washburn was a luminary in the field of international law, particularly dedicated to the International Criminal Court and advancing Americans' understanding of the Court as well as the official U.S. position on the Court. [. . .] He leaves a rich legacy of academics and civil society representatives throughout America inspired by him to continue his work. – Jennifer Trahan & Megan A. Fairlie, ABILA ICC Committee, co-chairs, and Leila Nadya Sadat President of ABILA and past chair, ICC Committee. See ABILA's ICC Committee full statement [here](#).
- History will show that John Washburn played an important role in marshaling the energy of U.S. civil society to support one of the most important building blocks, the ICC, to a future in which the rule of law replaces international anarchy. It is difficult to imagine a more noble and inspiring aspiration. He will certainly be missed for his indefatigable

dedication, but even more so, by those of us who had the chance to interact with him, for his friendliness, approachability, and sincere gratitude for the efforts of all who joined him in this noble endeavor. – Anthony Vance, Director, U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

- I first met John Washburn when he introduced himself to me, as John never hesitated to step forward, in 1988 when I was a senior consultant on the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, working for Chairman Dante Fascell. John was working with the U.N. Secretary-General at the time and lobbied me about the value of U.S. support for the work of the United Nations. He was diplomatic and persistent. He carried that torch of “U.S. support” into the ICC negotiations ten years later after he had retired from the United Nations. He continued to lobby me on behalf of international criminal justice during my years as the chief U.S. negotiator for the Rome Statute and its supplemental documents. Even after the Clinton Administration, when I was Senior Vice President of UNA-USA and providing support for AMICC, which John led, he was the relentless warrior for U.S. engagement with the ICC. So he and I had about two decades of collaboration, and I grew to respect him immensely. He made an enormous difference on public policy and mentored a generation of ICC supporters. I will miss him dearly and honor his contribution to the cause of justice. – Ambassador David Scheffer, U.S. Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues, 1997-2001
- [John] persisted, always committed to educating the public and dispelling misinformation, never embarrassed to put his all into making the dream that war criminals and genocidaires would one day be brought to justice a reality. His guidance was indispensable to our campaign to get President Clinton to sign the treaty. I still vividly remember the joyous, late night conference calls (pre-Zoom) and emails celebrating amongst WICC members and ICC coalition members around the world when we learned that he'd signed it just moments before the deadline at midnight. John always believed in Amnesty's power. He believed that if we mobilized the combined power of our grassroots and our lobbying, we could be the game-changer that would make a real impact on this issue in the US. He was such a kind man. May he rest in peace, and may his spirit give us the courage to never shrink from the hardest fights. – Vienna Colucci, Senior Director, Policy, Amnesty International USA
- In [John], I saw warmth, kindness and a vision for justice that is bigger than all of us. John became a dedicated supporter of DWAG. He will indeed be dearly missed but his work and vision will remain forever. The best way we can pay tribute and express our gratitude to John is to continue carrying on the mission that he dedicated his life to: working collectively to make our institutions and world more just. May John's soul rest in peace. – Niemat Ahmadi, Founder, Darfur Women's Action Group
- I first met John at the UN when I started following the PrepCom for the establishment of the ICC. I had never before followed meetings at the UN, and was confused by the multiplicity of statements and their seeming similarity. John took me under his wing and painstakingly explained how to evaluate the statements and read the room. His guidance was invaluable. I later spent time with him in Rome, at Kampala, at academic meetings,

and consulted with him on multiple occasions by phone. His leadership as head of AMICC was critically important to the small group of US scholars and activists following the ICC negotiations, the establishment of the Court, and the work of the Court thereafter. John always took the long view, and saw US participation as inevitable, even if far down the road. His faith in humanity and in justice was unshakeable. He was our leader, our guide, and our friend. John urged me some years ago to start an academic forum of US scholars and teachers on the International Criminal Court, and I did so at the Whitney Harris World Law Institute at Washington University in 2017. The [ICC Scholars Forum](#), as it has now come to be known, was John's brainchild, and along with a team of dedicated colleagues including Yvonne Dutton, Patrick Keenan, and Jennifer Trahan, we have kept it going for the past six years, many times meeting in The Hague and partnering with our European friends at Leiden University and elsewhere. The Forum is now hosted by the University of Illinois College of Law. We have decided to rename the Forum in John's honor, as a way of remembering his extraordinary contributions to international law, justice, and the International Criminal Court. Rest well, dear friend, after a life well-lived. – Leila Sadat, James Carr Professor of International Criminal Law at Washington University School of Law; Special Adviser on Crimes Against Humanity to the ICC Prosecutor

John's obituary is listed [here](#), and notes that donations in John's memory may be made to Amnesty International or [Doctors Without Borders](#).