

SPRING 2001

AHA FEMINIST CAUCUS



NEWSLETTER OF THE FEMINIST CAUCUS OF THE AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

Dr. Diana E.H. Russell Humanist Heroine 2001

AHA Feminist Caucus Humanist Heroines

- Diana Russell 2001*
- Molly MacGregor 2000*
- Lorrie Williams 1999*
- Loretta J. Ross 1998*
- Dottie Lamm 1997*
- Annette Van Howe 1996*
- Rosemary Matson 1995*
- Kristin Lems 1994*
- Barbara G. Walker 1993*
- Sally Roesch Wagner 1992*
- Sherry Matulis 1991*
- Carolyn McDade 1990*
- Ann Simonton 1989*
- Cleo Kocol 1988*
- Fran Hosken 1987*
- Patricia Maginnis 1986*
- Ben Munson, M.D. 1986*
- Anne Nicol Gaylor 1985*
- Tish Sommers 1984*
- Christine Craft 1983*
- Sonia Johnson 1982*

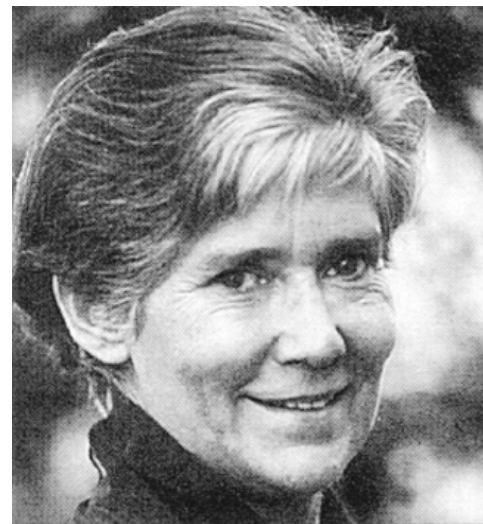
An internationally known scholar, author and speaker dedicated to eradicating violence against women will be honored by the AHA Feminist Caucus as "Humanist Heroine 2001," at the 60th anniversary conference of the American Humanist Association taking place at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel LAX, Los Angeles, May 18-20, 2001.

Diana Russell, an expert on sexual violence against women and author of 11 celebrated books, will be speaking on "Global Violence against Women."

Dr. Russell has lectured widely in the United States and abroad, and has appeared on hundreds of radio and TV shows, including Oprah Winfrey, Donahue, Geraldo, Merv Griffin, Studs Terkel and National Public Radio.

She was born in South Africa and participated in 1963 in the African Resistance Movement, an underground revolutionary anti-apartheid organization.

She received her B.A. from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, 1958. Dr. Russell received her postgraduate diploma in social science and administration, London School of Economics, 1961. She earned her M.A. in 1967 and her Ph.D.



in 1970 in social psychology from Harvard University.

She started teaching the first women's studies course at Mills College in 1969 and played a key role in developing the women's studies major at Mills. Her course titles included "Violence Against Women," "Women in Contemporary Society," "The Sociology of Sex Roles," "The Sociology of Oppression," and "Social Movements." She resigned her position as a full professor of sociology in 1991 to focus on her research full time. She is now a Professor Emerita of sociology at Mills.

AHA Feminist Caucus
founded by
Gina Allen 1977

Coordinators:

Meg Bowman (emerita)
Annie Laurie Gaylor
Trudie Hays

Newsletter Editor:

Annie Laurie Gaylor

Newsletter Production:

Liz Wayne

AHA Feminist Caucus

P.O. Box 448

Madison WI 53701

(608)256-5800

ftoday@mailbag.com

**Feminist Caucus
Newsletter**

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Page 2

She has been arrested in South Africa, England, and the USA for her political activities in 1963, 1974, and 1991, respectively.

She is a founder of Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media, 1976—the first feminist anti-pornography organization in the United States.

She was one of the primary organizers of the international Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels in 1976. As well as being a key organizer of what Simone de Beauvoir described as “a great historic event,” Dr. Russell co-authored a book about this global speak-out (*Crimes Against Women*, 1976).

In 1986 she received the C. Wright Mills Award (the most prestigious book award in sociology) for *The Secret Trauma*. The brilliant methodology of Dr. Russell’s random sample survey of sexual assault in San Francisco laid the groundwork for a radical new understanding of sexual violence in contemporary United States. Many scholars consider this work the definitive scientific study of incestuous abuse.

“Diana Russell has a rare ability to combine dispassionate scholarship with passionate commitment to the cause of women. With daring and persistence, she documents the fact that incest is endemic to our culture. This is a definitive work which will be used as a point of reference for years to come,” said Judith Herman, M.D., a professor, author and psychiatrist.

Drawing on results of her San Francisco survey, Dr. Russell wrote the first book ever published on *Rape in Marriage* (1982), at a time when husbands were still exempted from prosecution for raping their wives in the vast majority of states.

“This is a groundbreaking contribution to the literature on sexual assault and family violence from a compassionate scholar who is also a leading feminist theoretician,” wrote Susan Brownmiller.

Dr. Russell followed up that book with *Sexual Exploitation: Rape, Child Sexual Abuse, and Workplace Harassment* (1984). “Russell’s survey on sexual assault is the best that’s been done,” praised David Finkelhor,

Ph.D., an expert on child sexual abuse.

Coining the term “femicide,” Dr. Russell and Jill Radford documented the widespread occurrence of misogynist murders of women in an edited volume, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (1992).

Her book *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (1986) was one of the first feminist books to be published in South Africa. It focuses on women’s unsung contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle.

Desmond Tutu noted when he read it, “I fairly burst with pride and expectation—pride that South African soil has produced such indomitable women and not the least the author herself; and expectation at the contributions such women will continue to make in a post-apartheid South Africa. This remarkable book is a manifesto of hope.”

The Gustavus Myers Center named Dr. Russell’s *Exposing Nuclear Phallacies* the “Outstanding Book on Human Rights” in 1990.

In 1993 Dr. Russell edited a much-needed anthology on pornography, *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography*, 1993. She reprinted more than 100 examples of pornography in “Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm,” risking lawsuits from pornographers because of her faith that the most powerful evidence of the woman-hatred inherent in pornography is documented by the pornography itself. Gloria Steinem lauded the effort:

“Diana Russell has given us the ultimate proof of the impact and reality of pornography. Anyone who believes it to be less harmful than Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, and other hate/atrocious literature, or who imagines its opponents to be anti-sex or pro-censorship, must face the facts and images in *Against Pornography* . . . Used properly, it could save women’s lives.”

Dr. Russell will be presented with her “Humanist Heroine 2001” plaque and give her acceptance speech following the awards luncheon at the national AHA conference on Saturday, May 19. She will be introduced by Prof. Meg Bowman, Feminist Caucus co-chair emerita.

For last-minute information on register-

ing at the conference, phone the national AHA office at 1-800-743-6646 or try the AHA website at www.humanism.net

Room reservations should be made directly with the Sheraton Four Points Hotel, 9750 Airport Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90045, 1-800-529-4683. Identify yourself as attending the "AHA Humanist Conference."

Feminist Caucus Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Feminist Caucus of the American Humanist Association is scheduled to be held at 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. on Friday, May 18 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel, just before the annual membership meeting.

Our wonderful Feminist Caucus co-director "emerita," Prof. Meg Bowman, will be presiding at that meeting and you will not want to miss it! Meg runs a scintillating meeting. The annual meeting gives everyone a chance to introduce themselves, meet each other, touch feminist bases and learn something inspiring!

We encourage you to please send in your renewal or membership by mail, today,

using the handy pre-addressed envelope and membership coupon enclosed in this newsletter.

Send your \$15 dues to: AHA Feminist Caucus, PO Box 448, Madison WI 53701.

Thank you, Trudie!



Thanks to Trudie Hays, of Louisiana (at left), for serving as AHA Feminist Caucus co-chair and hosting last year's annual meeting and Humanist Heroine. Trudie will be resigning for health reasons. Trudie is pictured with co-chair emerita Prof. Meg Bowman, California (at right), who is hosting this year's annual meeting and continues her invaluable assistance to the Feminist Caucus!

Our 'Heroines' Expand Our Vision

By Rosemary Matson, 1995 Humanist Heroine

For several years the Feminist Caucus has selected a Feminist Heroine. We sometimes have trouble with the word 'heroine.' In my classes, I cannot use the word 'heroine' as students assume I mean the drug.

Here is a description of 'heroine' that seems to fit the word:

"We grow in spirals, circling the past and moving toward the possible, nurtured by ideas and insights as much as by healthy breakfasts. We grow because someone we meet in a book or on the job or in a chance encounter pushes us past our easy certainties and expands the scope of our vision.

"Our heroines broaden the base of our becoming, spark our imagination and encourage our commitment to do more than the expected, to be all that we can dream. We need to celebrate those whose names we have known since childhood. We need to discover those who have been hidden from history and those whose good work is now in progress. For our heroines inspire us to continue growing, not in size but in stature, not in one direction but in many dimensions." —*Andrea Fleck Clardy, "Heroines '84," Crossing Press, Trumansburg, NY 14886*

“Aw, Nancy, You’re Just a Girl!”

By Nancy Fox

Born a female? Bad enough with six brothers to taunt me: “Aw, Nancy, you’re just a girl!”

Bad enough a girl, but, double whammy, born in a place like China—for thirteen years (1917-1930) consumed by their “inferiority-of-women” culture!

Bad enough—in three marriages, my choosing the “Me, Tarzan—you, Nobody” type of husband!

Sad, bad enough, my church: Women do the menial work (dusting pews, polishing brass); Men the “real” work (preaching, baptizing). “It is woman” they pronounce, “who (through Eve), sullied this world with sin and death.”

And oh, bad enough—my country, my ancestry! Centuries of slavery, witch burnings, no woman suffrage. Good women out there, I ask you: “Are you willing to wait another millennium before achieving equal pay for equal work . . . before blacklisting the foes of contraception . . . before nullifying the nonsense that women are unfit for ordination to the priesthood?” How much longer will we tolerate rampant sexism which sabotages our status as women, as human beings of dignity and worth?

As an American woman, my feet were never bound, my face never veiled, nor my body burned at the stake. I was never tied to the rack, raped (came close), nor tortured by genital mutilation. But violence wears many faces. There’s this “other kind” which runs rampant in our “free” country—violence so subtle that women either fail to notice it, or feel it’s not worth a protest. Thus they assure that the scourge of sexism continues on its destructive path.

Alive and well, the double standard! Marital infidelity comes to mind. But have you given thought to the hidden implications when a man scolds you for your manner of speaking? Might this be his way of dismissing you without dealing with the

content of what you are saying? Or, suppose you’re a councilwoman, irate over some injustice. You speak out forcefully, wave your arms, hit the table, raise your voice. But what happens? You are put down as a “strident, over-emotional woman”!

But let a man pound the table, shatter the rafters, holler himself hoarse, and what happens? He’s praised for his leadership qualities, oratorical skill, clarity of expression!

Remember that exciting game we played as children? The girls formed a circle, joined hands, held on “ever-so-tight”! The boys then tried to barge in, break the chain, conquer the fort. Today, some women are doing just that—joining hands, holding fast, blocking intrusion into their lives by control freaks (whether family, church or state) who dictate what their choices should be.

For the sake of our daughters and the women of tomorrow, we must talk about this, compare notes, be less timid about challenging the status quo. In fairness, too, we must show gratitude for the men who care, who commit to gender equality, thus enhancing their own well-being, as well as that of women everywhere.

Visualize the day when the downtrodden, timid woman need no longer make this plea: “Let me be me!” Instead, she will be able to assert: “I *can* be—I *will* let myself be me!”

If you have been violated, ignored, rejected, intimidated, abused, you are not alone. I, too, and many women have been down that path. But I have found that for every setback, there is, if not a solution, then compensation. May you always see the sacred in every living thing, especially the sacred in yourself!

Born a girl? Good! Yes, *good enough!* A glorious calling! With boldness, we can make it so. (For when did the cautious ever bring about reform?)

Jean-Paul Sartre put it this way: “Freedom is what you do with what’s been done to you!”

Calling all NOW members

NOW is holding an election conference in Philadelphia at the Franklin Wyndham June 29, 2001.

Our own, Toni Van Pelt of SPLASH (St. Petersburg Larger Area Secular Humanists, Florida) is running with a wonderful team of feminists for President of the National Organization for Women, Inc. Please come and vote for her. For more info contact Toni at vanpelt@mindspring.com. Come check out TEAM NOW's Together Everyone Achieves. More at website: <http://erights4all.com>.

Be A Humanist Heroine (or Hero)!

Send in your 2001 AHA Feminist Caucus Membership today!

\$15.00/year

(The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College)



“. . . if you have an hour to spare, a dollar to give, or a word to utter—spare it, give it, and utter it, for the elevation of woman!”

— Ernestine L. Rose

Seventh Woman's Rights National Convention

New York City, 1856

(from Women Without Superstition,

anthology edited by Annie Laurie Gaylor)

Thanks For Supporting The Feminist Caucus!

Your Year 2001 Membership Is Due NOW!

AHA Feminist Caucus memberships are due at the time of the annual national AHA conference (May 2001). Please join or renew *promptly* to receive your 2001 membership card.

Dues: **\$15** individual; **\$25** chapter. Enclosed is _____ Enclosed is an extra donation of _____

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