

BCR REPORTS

A Quarterly Publication
of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

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Summer, 1991

"WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE THAT YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD?"

The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Bertha Reynolds Society

June 14-16, 1991, saw 240 social workers from 24 states come to Smith College at Northampton, Massachusetts for the 5th annual meeting of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society. Some observed that the conference was more racially diverse and multi-generational than any previous conference and the program reflected this. The turnout may also have resulted from the sense of urgency progressive social workers are feeling to explore ways to respond to the crises our clients, our communities, and – in many cases – our own jobs are facing.

The well-attended Friday Institutes covered the topics: Organizing Within the Workplace; Racism, Oppression and Clinical Practice; Feminist Practice; and Teaching as Political Practice. At the Friday plenary session, Susan Donner, Associate Dean of Smith College School for Social Work, welcomed the participants on behalf of Dean Ann Hartman. She pointed out that Bertha Reynolds was Associate Director of Smith, and though she was asked to resign due to political and professional differences, the School later honored her work.

One plenary keynote speaker, Heather Booth, from the Coalition for Democratic Values, outlined the ways in which the Democratic Party has lost its vision of a just America. She stressed the need to galvanize liberals and others back into substantive political practice in order to achieve a genuine democracy and restore government's legitimate responsibility. She

particularly stressed the agenda of national health insurance.

The other speaker was Barbara Joseph from District 65/Hofstra. She challenged us by posing the question, "who do you think you are that you can change the world?" She presented sobering observations of the many serious cultural, political and economic problems that are undermining the quality of life in both our cities and the country as a whole and which are further compounding the misery of oppressed groups. Joseph assured us that we have every right to believe that we can change our social system.

On Saturday, seventeen two-hour workshops addressed topics which ranged from coming out as a radical social worker to homelessness and AIDS. That evening, Ruth Pelham, a member of the People's Music Network, captivated the audience with her songs.

Sunday morning at the traditional "great meeting" which closes BCRS conferences, four speakers made thought-provoking presentations about the tradition and future of social work and radicalism.

Bertram Weinert argued for the need for BCRS to campaign for a universal, comprehensive, public, single payer system of national health insurance. He urged BCRS to look positively at the NASW and Russo proposals as the first item of business, with a view to how they can be improved.

In her presentation, Sandy Felder, President of Local 509, Service Employee International Union

of the Boston S.E.I.U., spoke of the traditions of unionism and how to implement them today. She called for us to work in a collective fashion in the spirit of butter, bread and roses. Specifically, she called on BCRS to use its resources to be involved in client centered issues, and pointed out that unions are a place to advance not only workers' rights but also social and client issues.

In his remarks, David Wagner called for us to re-examine both the distinction between liberal and radical approaches to social issues as well as the role of the state in service delivery. He urged progressive social workers to focus on the future of radical social work rather than becoming preoccupied with our traditions. He pointed out that in his book, *The Quest for a Radical Profession: Social Service Careers and Political Ideology*, he introduced the concept of "absorbed radicalism" to describe an inward looking approach, and that this can lead to missing changes going on around us. We must pay attention to the crisis on the left and how to resolve it, he argued.

Julie Reiskin, an activist for children and people with disabilities, is also president of her neighborhood organization. She called for a change in the ways social workers engage in practice and activism. She said that while progressives often say we want to empower people, often progressives and those in the union move-

GULF WAR UPDATE

by Michael A. Dover

The Gulf war stimulated increased activism and educational efforts by social workers and others. Activists report that work continues in order to restore a focus on the need for economic justice at home as well as to prevent further intervention overseas by U.S. forces.

In New York City, NASW has formed a Task Force on Peace and Economic Justice in which BCRS members participated. According to a flyer issued by the Task Force:

"Why can't we fight equally strong for our 12 million American children living in poverty, our 37 million Americans without health insurance, the millions of Americans without decent, affordable housing, and the countless people who await treatment for AIDS and drug addiction? We must consider how social work principles of self-determination and the deepening of human understanding have been sacrificed when our government and our people can be led by jingoism, can be desensitized to the dehumanization of another culture, and by the horror of war itself...If we ask ourselves why we become social workers, most of us would say we care about the suffering and misfortune of other human beings...We must continue to oppose U.S. military interventions in areas of the world."

BCRS member Tony Platt recently co-authored a pamphlet entitled, "A Time to Celebrate?," as part of the new series, *Questions and Answers About the Gulf War*, issued jointly by Global Options, Crossroads Magazine and Global Exchange. Platt is President of Global Options and teaches social work at the University of California at Sacramento.

The four page pamphlet discusses Bush's New World Order, and examines such questions as whether or not the war was a military or economic victory, and whether it reduced the threat of nuclear, chemical and biological

war in the region. (For more information about this and other related pamphlets write Global Options, P.O. Box 40601, San Francisco, CA 94140 or call 415-550-1703).

Another series of pamphlets stimulated by the activism around the war has been issued by the Open Magazine pamphlet series. The series includes pieces by Noam Chomsky, John Stockwell, Helen Caldicott and others. Just issued is a complete text of the U.N. report, *The Impact of War on Iraq: Report of the Secretary-General*. An excerpt from the report reads:

"It should, however, be said at once that nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen our country. The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology." (The cost of the pamphlet is \$3.50, from Open Magazine, P.O. Box 2726, Westfield NJ 07091 or call 908-789-9608).

Calls to support the Military Family Support Network went out in the last issue of *BCR Reports* as well as the newsletter of the NASW Social Workers for Peace and Justice. The Network will be continuing its work with returning G.I.'s and their families, as well as those overseas. The Network will also be working to promote "policies at home and abroad that help insure that our armed forces will not be misused in this way again." The Network currently has active networks in 46 states. Contributions can be sent to the Network at P.O. Box 11098, Milwaukee, WI 53211.

Report from the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry

Ma Tar, a well-known social worker in Prome, Burma, was reported by Asia Watch to have been arrested on July 19, 1990 on Martyr's Day following a demonstration. Martyr's Day marks the anniversary of the 1947 assassination of an independence leader and others. Though the demonstration was banned, over 100 students and many citizens marched to the monument carrying wreaths and flowers. There was a confrontation between students and the army, but the march was allowed to proceed peacefully. However, afterward Ma Tar and several others were arrested. The Committee has been told that it is unlikely that she could have been released and that it is standard practice to torture and rape women political prisoners; it is uncertain if she is still alive.

Ma Tar is just one of the large number of political prisoners of the military junta in Burma, which has refused to accept an overwhelming defeat in an election in May 1990. Over 80% of the people voted for the candidates of the National League for Democracy, many of whom are now imprisoned.

The Committee is asking members of Congress to contact the U.S. State Department to express their concern and to urge the Department to ask for information about Ma Tar from the Burma military government.

Please help this effort by writing your U.S. Representative or your Senator. Send copies of your letters, or a note saying to whom you have sent them to the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry, c/o New York City Chapter, Natl. Assn. of Social Workers, 545 8th Ave., 6th floor, New York, N.Y. 10018, Attn.: Ruth H. Wilson.

BCRS Endorses Solidarity Day August 31st in D.C.

Ten years ago on Solidarity Day 1981, the AFL-CIO successfully mobilized nearly a million people in Washington, D.C. Although the Federation had sponsored a smaller march focused on full employment in 1975, this was the first major demonstration called by labor in decades.

All three demonstrations found their origin in rank-and-file demands for a more activist approach by labor to the nation's problems than traditional lobbying and electoral politics. The last Solidarity Day march was first proposed by the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists at their New Orleans convention last year.

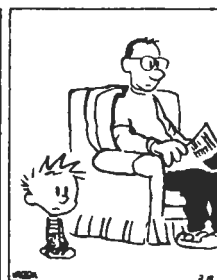
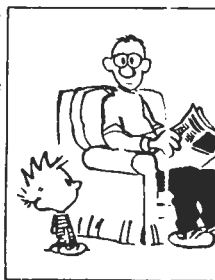
Slated for August 31st in D.C., the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, Solidarity Day 1991 was first focused on three goals, including a ban on permanent replacement of strikers, national health care reform and support for freedom of association at home and abroad. However, as a growing number of national and local organizations have announced their support of the march, the federation is reportedly expanding the list of issues included under the Solidarity Day umbrella to include passage of the Civil Rights and Women's Equality Act of 1991 and a host of other issues.

Several BCRS members began work as early as May to influence other social work organizations and schools of social work to participate fully in the event as well as in the coalition being formed to organize the event.

As Bertha Reynolds wrote, "What are we to do to carry out our professional responsibilities in a society which...denies the basic human rights which are the foundation of any attempt to do professional work with people? We must first know our allies." Clearly, the coalition developing around Solidarity Day 1991 is an alliance social workers must fully participate in.

CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



I THINK GROWN-UPS JUST ACT LIKE THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.



CSWE Accreditation Guidelines and Education for Progressive Social Work

By August 1st, all schools of social work will receive a draft of a new curriculum policy statement from the Council of Social Work Education. CSWE will request feedback about this statement by September 15th in order to prepare a final version for Board consideration in November.

I urge all faculty and administrators in schools of social work to carefully examine this statement as to its relevance for our concerns about progressive social work education and to use this opportunity for providing feedback to CSWE.

Examine the draft policy statement in the context of the existing guidelines for accreditation, (normally available in the office of your Dean), and in the context of what

we mean by progressive social work education.

Send your feedback to CSWE by the September 15th deadline. I would be interested in receiving a copy of your feedback for purposes of preparing a summary for publication in *BCR Reports*.

Should we uncover problems with CSWE accreditation guidelines, a report by all those concerned to the Executive Committee of the Board of CSWE might well be in order. I would be glad to do a first draft of this report based on your findings and route it back to you for any needed revision.

— James Herrick, School of Social Work, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.

Professional Exchanges With The Soviet Union

A new organization has been formed by BCRS members, "International Professional Exchanges" (IPE) to facilitate exchanges of professionals in the field of human services.

Currently, opportunities are available with the Soviet Union. In close collaboration with our Soviet colleagues in the newly established National Association of Social Educators/USSR (the professional organization of social workers in the Soviet Union), a series of activities has been programmed. Starting last April and continuing during the year, conferences, visits of program sites, cultural and recreational

activities throughout the Soviet Union as well as meetings with professionals in the fields of social work, psychology, health sociology/anthropology, urbanism, and related areas are planned. In country arrangements will be organized by NASE/USSR. American participants will have the opportunity to experience Soviet life through home stays with our Soviet colleagues.

Anyone interested should contact: Nancy Schulz, International Professional Exchange, 4555 Henry Hudson Parkway, Suite 604, Riverdale, N.Y. 10471-3836 or call (212) 549-7626.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Chapter Updates:

Puget Sound Area: The Seattle Chapter has scraped back the creeping moss of a long wet winter and kept the chapter active with monthly general meetings and development of three sub-groups: social action, support, and study. Additionally, we planned and sponsored two presentations and a forum.

On February 28th a panel discussion took place on the effect of the Gulf War on social workers and the people they serve. The rapid pace of the War and the distressing efficacy of the military public relations machine left many social workers searching for meaningful ways to channel their energy and emotions. The range of responses was diverse and encouraging.

Four of the most active members of the Chapter, Susan Brower, Susan James, Susan Nelson (no kidding) and Catherine Bradshaw conducted a panel discussion at the April 26th NASW Pacific Northwest Regional Symposium in Spokane, Washington. Entitled: "Progressive Social Work in Current Practice: The Legacy of Bertha Capen Reynolds," The Susans and a Catherine spoke about the history of progressive social work, the history of Bertha Capen Reynolds, and modern examples of progressive social work. The panel was well received and a lively discussion followed.

Please mail all contributions for the next *BCR Reports* to:

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SUNY College
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Brockport, NY 14420

Letters to the editor, essays, news items, BCRS Chapter activities, cartoons, etc., are all welcome!

Two days later we sponsored a forum titled; "Toward a Social Work Union." Four individuals with different union affiliations and perspectives made up the panel. The event was well attended and left people energized to further explore the possibilities. Although we operate with very low overhead, these events have more than depleted the Chapter's meager community chest. A plea goes out to all members to renew their memberships for 1991 and encourage their friends and colleagues to join BCRS. Just photocopy the membership form in the newsletter. Anyone wanting more information regarding the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society or Puget Sound Chapter activities can call Graydon Andrus at (206) 725-2713.

New York City Chapter: Chapter members utilized a telephone tree to call most New York City and Westchester members to participate in the demonstrations against the war in the Gulf on January 19 and 26, 1991. Members carried the BCRS banner in both demonstrations. Members volunteered to work with the Military Families Support Network, a peace organization with family and friends who were sent to the Gulf, and several helped to give and Easter Party for MFSN children as well as children from a nearby shelter for the homeless - two groups who bore the brunt of our country's misplaced priorities.

In February, the Chapter hosted a very successful panel discussion on *INSIDE/OUTSIDE*, "Surviving as a Progressive within 'The System'" with three advocates who are now working within government who shared their successes and their frustrations. The Fall program being planned will feature the video *TAKEOVER* which follows organizing to takeover empty housing for the homeless.

BCRS Members In Action:

Arnold Krotokin of Montclair State College, New Jersey, took part in a round table discussion on the Gulf War on February 19. The event was filmed and aired on cable television in early March. He also took part in a "teach-in" at the College aimed at exploring the socio-economic consequences of the war and U.S. policy.

Alan Lefkowitz, a clinical social worker whose practice has included many comics, wrote an editorial for *The New York Daily News*, "Laughing Matter, Jackie is Not" regarding the problems of the humor of Jackie Mason. Lefkowitz also wrote an article for the December 13, 1990, *New York Newsday* entitled "The Fears of a Clown" which discussed how many comedians view their lives.

Philip Lichtenberg, Professor in the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College, recently authored "Undoing the Clinch of Oppression" which was published by Peter Lang Publishing, New York. The book shows that the social division of labor in handling emotions creates and maintains oppression - inside the family, as in child abuse, and in the larger social scene, as at work or inside social movements. Lichtenberg describes processes by which oppression is installed and how social groups may use clinically-derived understandings to create new ways for managing commonly seen guilt, self-hatred, rage and anxiety.

Milton Tambor recently completed his Ph.D. in Sociology at Wayne State University in Detroit. The title of his dissertation was "The Scope of Bargaining in Labor Agreements Within Non-Profit Agencies." The focus is upon policy and professional provisions in AFSCME contracts and the determinants of those outcomes. The dissertation's findings will be shared with AFSCME International and its professional and non-profit advisory committees.

SEARCH FOR A HUMANE SOCIETY: MOSCOW AND ALBANY

By Bernard Wohl

On Thanksgiving Day last year, Dr. V. Bocharova and Dr. A. Dashkina, of the Soviet Union, walked into the New York City Goddard-Riverside Community Center unannounced. They had been told by a member of the International Committee of the National Association of Social Workers to look us up as an example of a "multi-service social agency."

The two women authors were researching "school - community" approaches for the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and wanted to find out what was being thought and done in the United States. They are members of the National Association of Social Educators in the Soviet Union which, in difficult times, is attempting to draw the attention of their country to the needs of children and youth.

They asked torrents of questions and took every brochure, newsletter and report I could xerox for them to carry back to the Soviet Union. (They looked with wonder at our "great equipment" - a xerox machine and staplers).

At the end of two hours of rapid fire interrogation, they said, "This is what we have been looking for" and invited me to their January conference of delegates from far-flung republics.

They wanted desperately to talk about their work, their problems and practice with counterparts in the United States. Would I not come? They had no funds for transportation but they would put me up in one of their homes if I could get there. Our agency had no funds either but two board members put up the air fare and I went.

It was an incredible experience for me. Many of their delegates had traveled further than I had to get there. The depth of the problems, the yearning for change, and the expectation that the United States could illuminate direction were startling.

At the end of the conference I

asked, "what are you after? What do you want to achieve?" They answered, "a humane society."

I winced internally. Their requests for continued professional interchange and for exploration of exchange programs for students present ordinary difficulties. Colleagues in the United States can put heads together and design ways.

But to delineate a humane society?

I returned to the barbarity of the budget cuts at home - all of them directed against those already burned in the door of the oven. They are the poor, the homeless and the hurt, the mentally ill, the physically ill, old and young, those with AIDS, those in need of drug treatment, and the children, always the children. Those who survive face the steady retraction of all options for education and jobs, leaving the choice of the military or the streets.

In the weeks after Moscow, I and others, professional workers and community participants, staff and parents, badgered the politicians and legislators to examine our tax structure for more equitable patterns in raising revenue for education, health and welfare, for jobs, for the protection of the environment and the safety of bridges and subways, for the sustenance of art and culture, for the future of children.

There were and are serious alternatives for change, but they require a monumental shift in how we define the community of a humane society. We are polarized by race and class and all the blows are directed at the poor, the African Americans, the Latino, the immigrants of everywhere. We sunder our community along lines of privilege and protection. Those in high places hijack our resources in the billions through corruption and greed - the S and L's, the war-making industries, and their political lubricators. When the losses are called, the pain is born at poverty's

edge - the working poor (first to lose their jobs), the unemployed (whose insurance is delayed or denied), as well as those who need training and treatment and welcome into community life.

Out of meetings and protests and visits to legislators here and in Albany came a next step agenda - a protest rally in Albany to address the Governor and the legislature. We at Goddard-Riverside Community Center decided to join the protest ride to Albany, but it was not an unquestioned decision. The director of one of our most committed community programs asked: "Who will care? People will go and fight for their separate programs. It may be catharsis for them, but what difference will that make?"

But the people who went this time went in a different way. They did shout and sloganeer for their special programs, but not in separation from one another. They did it as common sufferers, those who paid an unfair price at the edge of the crevasse. The placards called for child care, youth programs, services for the mentally ill and the preservation of the jobs of the working poor, and countless other needs. They cried: "Share the pain! Fair taxes! When we work, New York works!"

The bus that left from the community center carried all strands of our community - staff, volunteers, participants of our many programs, parents of the youth in our after school programs, seniors, and many others. There was a sense of common endangerment and shared community, hungering for a humane society.

On the Friday night before the march on Albany, we had called an emergency meeting of the parents of youth in our after school programs, threatened with a 54% budget cut. The auditorium was filled to capacity. One of the fathers said bitterly: "The Gulf War had more than our share of young

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The Poverty and Race Research Action Council

This is a new national federation, convened by major civil rights, civil liberties, and anti-poverty groups. Their purpose is to link social science research to advocacy work in order to address successfully problems at the intersection of race and poverty. PRAC will: fund research tied to local, state and national advocacy strategies; enhance communication between advocates and social science researchers to coordinated strategy in the race and poverty area; and hold conferences, publish reports and disseminate ideas and materials focusing on issues of race and poverty.

The advocacy work they will support includes any organized effort to eliminate poverty and racially-based disadvantages: litigation, legislation, public education, community organizing, and anything else that effectively works for progressive social change. The social science research they will fund encompasses the collection and analysis of information that leads to greater understanding of social problems and better strategies to overcome them. They are also interested in producing instructive case studies of already completed successful (as well as unsuccessful) strategies. For more details, contact: Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 714, Washington, D.C. 20009 or call (209) 387-9887.



Photo taken at the December 1990 BCRS steering committee meeting. Back row, from left: Graydon Andrus, Joel Blau, Karen Germano, Phil Brown, Mike Dover, Marti Bombyk, Don Cooney, Ken Grossinger, Jerry Sachs, Marilyn Moch, Mimi Abramovitz. Second row: Patti Criswell, Sandra Bauman, Sharon Freedberg, Ann Withorn

"WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE THAT YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD?"

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ment don't always act in a way which is inclusive. They need to listen better to what clients are saying, and not use the work "empowerment" loosely. Reiskin pointed out a division between professionals and clients rooted in some aspects of professionalism. Noting that people in service jobs need to move beyond a single method (i.e., case-work) in order to become better advocates, she argued that social workers need to change attitudes which are anti-client and which maintain distance between them and their clients.

Always intended to be more of a gathering of like-minded people rather than a professional conference, participants' sense of belonging as progressive social workers was heightened by the turnout, almost double previous attendance. A sense of humor combined with a commitment to the seriousness of the issues being addressed by progressive social workers, left many of us feeling rejuvenated and focused as the conference came to an end.

SEARCH FOR A HUMANE SOCIETY: MOSCOW AND ALBANY

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people in the military. Our kids' choices were the army or the streets, not job or other opportunities. And that's what is happening again for our younger ones. They cut out of the budget everything good, good education and work. What's left is the army for those who aren't killed on the streets."

On the bus to Albany and home again, there was a sense of shared community in struggling together against cynicism and despair. That's the only fragment of practice for a humane society we can share with colleagues in the Soviet Union.

(Bernard Wohl is Executive Director, Goddard-Riverside Community Center)

Book Order Form

Name _____ BCRS Member? _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Prov _____ Zip Code _____

TITLE	QUANTITY	UNIT/PRICE	TOTAL
Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work Reynolds stresses the need for the professional social worker to be educated as a whole person. She describes the stages of conscious intelligence in the process of learning and relates them, to the motivation for learning. Softbound		\$11.00	
Social Work & Social Living The practice and philosophy of social work are critically examined. Reynolds argues, based upon her experiences with labor unions, that the orientation of social agencies toward psychological dynamics makes it difficult for clients to seek help. Softbound.		\$ 7.00	
Between Client & Community Caseworkers are often caught between the conflicting needs of their clients and the community, especially in times of rapid change. Reynolds examines how these conflicting demands can be resolved. Softbound		\$ 7.00	
Uncharted Journey Reynolds' inspirational autobiography dedicated to "young social workers who are facing realities and shaping our profession with courage and creativity." Covers the development of her practice philosophy and the course of her career from 1914-1964. Softbound.		\$16.00	
The Years Have Spoken A collection of annual greetings sent by Reynolds to her friends from 1935-1973. The collection includes her annual original verse and narrative describing the condition of the world that year and how she had been affected by these events. Makes an excellent holiday or graduation gift. Softbound.		\$10.00	
RETURN FORM TO:		TOTAL	
BCRS Book Fund Columbus Circle Station P.O. Box 20563 New York, NY 10023		ADD 10% SHIPPING	

How To Organize A BCRS Chapter:

"How to Organize a BCRS Chapter" organizing packets are available by contacting Marti Bombyk at: BCRS, Columbus Circle Station, P.O. Box 20563, New York, NY, 10023. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletter(s), copy of by-laws, name(s) of BCRS organizer from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much much more! Allow 4 weeks for delivery.

Response to the Call to Join the BERTHA CAPEN REYNOLDS SOCIETY

- Please send me more information about the Society.
- I would like to join the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society.
- I would like to renew my membership.

Enclosed is my check:

- \$10 Student, unemployed, low-income member
- \$25 Member
- \$100 Sustaining Member
- \$250 Institutional Member
- I would also like a subscription to the *Journal of Progressive Human Services*:
 - Individual Subscription: \$10 for BCRS members (regularly \$12.00)
 - Institution Subscription: \$20

Library Subscription: \$25

Name
(please print or type)

Address

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Affiliation (optional)

Telephone
(Home) _____ (Work) _____

**Please make your check payable to
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and return to:**

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Delmar, NY 12054

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