

# BCR REPORTS

A Quarterly Publication  
of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

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Winter, 1992

## SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 1992 BCRS MEETING AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK FORUMS

The 1992 national BCRS Conference will be held in conjunction with the 1992 *International Social Work Forums: Claiming Human Rights and Meeting Human Needs in Different Cultures*, scheduled for June 26-28, 1992 at the United Nations and the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City.

In early 1990, members of organizations (including BCRS) representing much of New York City's ethnic and racial diversity formed a coalition. The Coalition saw the need to transcend the traditional boundaries of race, ethnicity, and field of practice which often divides social workers in order to improve and enhance an often divisive social welfare system. The mission of the Coalition is to improve services to clients, service delivery systems and our own lives by listening to and learning from each other, planning together, and developing new collaborative approaches to alleviate human suffering.

The Coalition consists of a mixture of national membership and local membership organizations: The Alliance of Hispanic Social Workers, American Indian Community House, Asian/Pacific Islander Social Workers, Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry, Hunter College School of Social Work, National Association of Black Social Workers, and three committees of the New York City Chapter of the National Association

tion of Social Workers (NASW) – The International Affairs Committee, The Affirmative Action/Minority Affairs Committee, and Social Workers for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament.

### INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK FORUMS



Also during 1992, many events will commemorate the landfall of Columbus in the New World. Anticipating these events, the Coalition has planned this series of International Forums stressing the themes of cultural diversity and the need to respect and learn from the many different national and ethnic peoples in this country and the world. It is the sense of the planning coalition that the indigenous people of the Americas, those

brought here as slaves, those who became virtual slaves upon their arrival, workers, and the poor, have had the strengths of their cultures ignored and neglected. We need to listen to and learn from each other or we will, by our failure to develop our strengths, support the glorification of oppression and genocide. We must join forces to meet human needs and improve human rights.

The Forums will provide us with new models to help solve the problems of diminishing resources and escalating social ills by strengthening support for working in coalition with others, creating understanding and support for culturally diverse approaches to social service work, and disseminating knowledge on effective programs so that practitioners can better work together. Workshops will encourage the sharing and development of effective interventions in areas of social crisis. Some of the workshops are: Children's Rights, Cultural Genocide, Cultural Expression and Preservation as Healing and Survival, The Meaning of Help in Different Cultures, Cross-Cultural Identity, Accepting Responsibility for our Elders, and Human Rights and Social Work Practice, as well as workshops applying some of these concepts to the known areas of practice such as Disabilities, AIDS, and Homelessness.

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## **BCRS Chapter Updates:**

**San Francisco Bay Area Chapter Report:** Ralphyne MacDonald, long-time friend of Bertha Reynolds and the former director of the San Francisco Department of Community Mental Health, hosted the last BCRS meeting.

An organizing committee was formed, consisting of Ann Battersby, Jim Calonico, and Rita Barouch. At a member's request, they developed a survey to determine the interests and needs of the 80 Bay Area BCRS members. Stay tuned for the results!

The survey is a good organizing tool for new chapter development or to assess current members' interests. If you would like a copy, contact Steering Committee member Ken Grossinger listed in the newsletter under National Steering Committee Members.

**Stony Brook:** Based in the SUNY Stony Brook School of Social Welfare, the Stony Brook Chapter of BCRS met monthly during Fall and Winter. Speakers gave presentations on gay and lesbian issues in social work, on domestic violence, and national health care. These lunch time presentations were attended by 15-20 people. Many more students have expressed interest in the Chapter, and a much larger contingent is expected to attend the International Forums in June.

**Pioneer Valley Chapter (Mass.):** This Chapter had its first meeting at Smith College School for Social Work. There was good comradeship and a second meeting was planned to focus on unemployment and work issues in a reactionary environment for human services.

**Kalamazoo Chapter:** BCRS members interviewed staff at 50 human service agencies to determine the effect of extensive state budget cuts on clients. BCRS then sponsored a panel of Michigan politicians who engaged in a public debate about the budget cuts.

BCRS brought Frances Fox Piven, author of *Why Americans Don't Vote*, and *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, to speak on the Western Michigan University campus. BCRS members raised the funds to support the endeavor.

The Chapter sponsored a three day workshop January 17-19 for community members, local human service agency staff and university students, concerning methods to organize communities for social change. The workshop will be led by Bill Moyer, Director of the Social Movement Empowerment Project in San Francisco.

**Seattle/Puget Sound:** For the past few months we have been monitoring the success of our new structure. Out of a brainstorming meeting last Fall emerged four committees that keep our members active and informed: Membership/Outreach; Education; Social Action; and Support (AKA the "Potluck" committee).

The Membership committee has sent out information on BCRS to local social service/activist organizations. We'd like to expand the range of human service workers who join BCRS. Also, in terms of public relations, members have been tabling area events, bringing informational materials and talking to people about the Society. Events included, for example, an Anti-War Toy Demonstration before the holidays and a Tree Undecorating Party rally against the state budget cuts to social services.

Because the state's fiscal crisis and budget deliberations stand to have a huge impact on human needs, the next forum in planning by the Education committee will be on tax reform. (Washington does not have an income tax).

The Social Action arm of our chapter has merged with SPARC - Social and Political Activists for Revolutionary Change - a group that began out of the University of

Washington School of Social Work last year during the Gulf War. It was decided to concentrate on issues of housing and homelessness for now, and build alliances with activists and city advocates for the homeless who have expressed a need for assistance.

Lastly, the Potluck Committee has been providing us with stimulating questions and topics for discussion during our general meetings/potlucks. The first talk about "Empowerment - What Does it Mean?" was so successful that we'll go another round next time to share methods of empowerment practice and offer ways to support empowerment in less than ideal work environments.

**Chicago:** The Progressive Social Workers of Chicago group is now 6 months old and progressing steadily toward developing a solid core of active members and former members of the Chicago Alliance of Social Service Workers, a group that was very active in the late 1970's and early 1980's, then became dormant. The PSSWC has been meeting every 2 months for a business meeting and potluck. We have developed a near final draft of our principles which combines those of BCRS and the CASSW. We have excellent linkages with other groups in Chicago such as the Public Welfare Coalition, Democratic Socialists of America, Gray Panthers, and the progressive ward organizations in the city. We also have connections to all of the schools of social work in the city. In future meetings we plan to discuss the implications of cutting General Assistance in Illinois using the Michigan experience as an example. We expect to hold three program meetings in the next year, alternating with our potlucks. Those interested in the Chicago group should contact Joan Dworkin at 312-996-4981.

### **BCRS Chapter Updates:**

**Houston:** The new "Lone Star" Bertha Chapter took part in a demonstration outside of the Jasper County Courthouse. They protested the two to 20 year prison sentence of a 19-year-old woman which she received for fatally stabbing her husband whom she said repeatedly beat her. The BCRS members joined several Beaumont and Houston groups that oppose domestic violence.

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### **Steering Committee Political Discussion:**

At its January 18-19th meeting in New York City, the National Steering Committee of BCRS discussed the issue of the relationship between the market economy and social welfare, with the particular objective of clarifying what strategies progressive human service workers might pursue in the current period. Some committee members were interested in the political potential of universal social programs that targeted common human needs such as housing, health, and day care. Others expressed concern that without adequate attention to issues of race and gender, universal social programs would merely reproduce the same inequities.

Two other questions were organized around this discussion. On the one hand, committee members spoke about the need to learn how to talk about these issues. On the other hand, there was general agreement that we had to link these middle-range goals to a broader social vision. What that vision should be, and how it might best be articulated, will be the subject of the Steering Committee's political discussion in the coming months.

### **An Appeal from the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry**

BCRS has joined with the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry and Social Workers for Peace and Justice to support human rights programs in the World Assembly in July, 1992 and the International Social Work Forums in New York City in June. With your help, two outstanding social workers will be able to attend and speak at these events.

Shirley Gunn, South Africa's heroic social worker and trade union organizer, was imprisoned with her two year-old son, Haroon, and subsequently subjected to ongoing court appearances which finally ended in May, 1991. Social worker Judy Taguiwalo was imprisoned in the Philippines together with her daughter, Inday June, until the end of the Marcos dictatorship.

We urge you to help enable these two women and their children to travel to the U.S. For their stay here for approximately 32 days, including a period of agency visits in New York City, it is necessary to raise approximately \$8,000. We are encouraged by the initial response, but your participation is critical. Please send your most generous contribution immediately, made out to BCRS and specifying that your contribution is for Gunn/Taguiwalo, and mail it to: International Social Work Forums, 545 Eighth Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, New York, 10018.

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### **Social Workers and Public Policy Conference:**

BCRS is among the sponsors of a conference in Albany, New York entitled, "Social Workers and Public Policy: Visions and Strategies," to be held on April 5th and 6th, 1992.

This will be two days of in-depth workshops, plenary sessions and networking opportunities. Explore the links between your social work role and advocacy, law-making, regulation, and implementation. Keynote speaker is Maryann Mahaffey, Detroit City Council President and first woman elected president of the NASW. The conference is being organized by the Center for Women in Government at the University at Albany, SUNY. For more information, write: Social Workers and Public Policy, Center for Women and Government, University at Albany, Draper Hall 310, Albany, New York 12222, or call 518-422-4900.

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### **March For Your Right To Choose!!!!**

Join thousands of others in Washington, D.C. on April 5th to express your anger over the threats to reproductive choice in this country. Contact NYS-NARAL, 2 West 64th Street, New York, New York, 10023 or call (212) 724-5770 for more information about this important event.

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

**Barbara Kasper, Editor**  
Social Work Department,  
Faculty Office Building  
SUNY College  
at Brockport  
Brockport, NY 14420  
FAX #716-325-1503

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

**Please Note:** The deadline for materials submitted for inclusion in the next *BCR Reports* is April 15, 1992.

## National Steering Committee Report

The Steering Committee met in New York City the weekend of January 18-19 at the Goddard Riverside Community Center and the home of Mimi Abramovitz. We'd like to thank Mimi and Bernie Wohl, Goddard-Riverside's Executive Director, for making such comfortable space available to us.

Reporting to the group in an informal "State of the Steering Committee" discussion, I made the following observations about our current status. First, a recent decision to fully reimburse travel expenses for non-New York City based Steering Committee members has some important implications. By making it financially feasible for all chapter representatives and subcommittee chairs to attend our meetings, the National has further committed to itself to diversify our membership and chapter bases. We are trying to balance the distribution of membership and leadership away from its Northeast dominance. This notably large outlay of travel funds increases the expectations that those who participate in Steering Committee meetings are being very active in the BCRS between meetings and conferences by undertaking major chapter or Steering Committee projects. This investment in equal chapter and subcommittee representation will ensure democratic decision making at the National level. Simultaneously, it requires chapters (if there is to be money in our treasury) to remain viable and visible through their diverse grass-roots activities, which include developing leadership and recruiting local members who pay dues to the national BCRS. In short, expectations of mutual accountability and responsibility have increased. I am confident of the wisdom of the decision and hopeful that our higher expectations will yield greater energy for our new and continued projects.

We have added two new members to the Steering Committee who are undertaking some very important work. Catherine Bradshaw of Seattle is now co-chairing the Membership subcommittee with Michael Dover, Membership Secretary. Their creative synergy has produced several new methods for outreach to prospective membership. In addition, Carol Kaplan of New York is serving as the liaison to our faculty network. We have almost 300 BCRS members who teach in schools of social work. We hope that by communicating with them more regularly, we will be able to enhance our visibility in the schools, develop more school-based chapters, and provide support for the progressive education of social service workers. Welcome Catherine and Carol!

Also, we are happy that "chapterless" Steering Committee members are helping develop chapters in Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley (Jerry Sachs), Chicago (Joan Dworkin), the Bay Area (Ken Grossinger), Arizona (David McKell), Albany (Fred Newdom), and Stonybrook, NY (Joel Blau). We look forward to new representatives from recently established chapters in Maine and Houston at our next Steering Committee meeting, scheduled for March 28-29 in New York City.

Some of us who have served on the Steering Committee for several years have not always been aware of our organization's development because, to our radical impatience, it seems so darn slow. In fact, at the age of six, our organization is now a healthy young adult. We have high tech membership and treasury systems, a regular newsletter, and excellent communication systems for getting out our mailings. Over the years our national conferences have improved with regard to attendance, quality, and breadth of workshops, and the diversity of presenters and participants.

With our foundation solidly developed, we are now ready to do more of the work we wanted to accomplish by forming this organization. We are organizing local chapters to support progressive social service workers and to provide forums for education and activism. We are engaging in national social justice and peace coalition work. We are able to enter and shape debates on the pressing social issues of our times. We have the mechanisms to respond to our members' new initiatives. Our organization is ready for the struggles of the 90's and beyond.

With a feeling of pride and satisfaction in the organization we have become, I am formally announcing my intention to resign from the position of Chair of the National Steering Committee at the end of 1992. The next chair will be elected at the Fall Steering Committee meeting. I will work closely with her or him until December to smoothly transfer my responsibilities. I want to take this opportunity to express my parting sentiments to the membership...

I have truly enjoyed being a part of the Steering Committee, a remarkable group of dedicated, politically astute social workers. While our ability to agree on what is to be done and our ability to actually do it has never been an easy process, it has always been rewarding. I'm also thinking of all of you who have individually related to me as a fellow member of the BCRS. Your good company and our good work made my job memorably fulfilling, and kept my sense of direction and purpose clear. Thank you, dear friends for all we have shared and for all we have learned with each other. I wish my successor and the next generation Steering Committee the best, and look forward to continued work with the BCRS as a rank and file member.

*By Marti Bombyk, Chair*

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## Worth Reading:

*The Visible Poor: Homelessness in the United States*, by Joel Blau, Oxford University Press, 1992.

The growth of the homeless population is a product of political and economic changes that have swept through the United States during the last decade: the explosion of low wage jobs, cutbacks in social welfare benefits, the scarcity of low income housing, and the failure to care for the mentally ill.

In *The Visible Poor: Homelessness in the United States*, Joel Blau explores the causes of homelessness and analyzes how we have responded to it. What has the government done? What has it failed to do? Emphasizing the role of public poverty in shaping the government's response, *The Visible Poor* compares the response to homelessness in ten major U.S. cities: Miami, Houston, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. It finds that while some cities helped more than others, most merely offered some temporary shelter which would get homeless people off the street. Truly permanent solutions to homelessness - high wages, better social services, the large-scale provision of affordable housing - could not be implemented, because they conflicted with the same political and economic trends that made people homeless in the first place. At the same time, however, the declining standard of living for poor and working people - of which homelessness is only the most public evidence - has created the possibility of a broad-based political coalition that could reverse the disastrous effects of domestic social policies over the last twenty years.

Senator Paul Wellstone (D- Minn.) said: "Blau's work combines the best of public policy analysis with a commitment to the poor in America. I will assign it to future Political Science classes when I go back to teaching and do my best to assign now to every United States Senator."

## BCRS Brochure Available:

Members wishing to order copies of the Society's new brochure may request up to 100 copies by calling Tara Quillinan at Communication Services at (518) 463-3522, faxing her at (518) 426-3961 or writing her at: 4 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 11210. The new brochure has an easy to use tear-off return form, and features an "Our Members Say" section with quotes from Chauncey Alexander, Millie Charles, Herman Curiel, Lorraine Gutierrez, Barbara Joseph, Maryann Mahaffey, Mary Bricker-Jenkins, Irmgard Wessel, Susan Kinoy and Sandy Felder. Order copies for your school or workplace today!

**"CUBA ARTICLE DRAWS CONTROVERSY"**

The welcome instructiveness of your lead story affording a view from Cuba was dwarfed by the major shock - scandal might not be too strong a word - resulting from the fact that Ms. Kaplan glaringly omitted "Myth # 4," if, indeed, it is a myth. I refer to the many reports of oppression of male homosexuals in Cuba.

Did Kaplan omit this because it is not a myth or because she is unable to refute it? This omission is doubly shocking for an organization with a sizable lesbian-gay membership and constituency.

*Richard Steinman, MSW, Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Southern Maine*

At a recent BCRS Chapter meeting, Richard Steinman admired the content of a recent article in the Fall 1991 issue of *BCR Reports* entitled "Open the Door and Let in the Light: A View from Cuba," but was upset that the article never addressed the issue of treatment of gay men in contemporary Cuban society.

He felt that since BCRS has a significant lesbian-gay membership, the lack of discussing this issue represented a serious omission which he protested in letters.

It is my understanding that the intent of the Cuba article was not to highlight problems of Cuba, but rather to dispel some myths and disinformation that shrouds Cuba. BCRS has a large female population; why were the shortcomings of the Revolution and women's issues not addressed? Or housing shortages? Or racism? Furthermore, if BCRS is concerned with "putative persecution," as Mr. Steinman asserted, the United States government's nefarious aggression against Cuba, largest of its kind, (now surpassed by Nicaragua) has had devastating environmental, political, social, and economic consequences that affects all Cubans. These sordid

actions of our government towards Cuba and much of the Third World do not have any moral, political, or ethical grounding whatsoever.

Individuals can point to the defects of Cuba, FMLN, PLO, Sandinistas, or the ANC, while failing to look at the bigger picture of U.S. intervention within the world. These groups do have problems and issues that can be addressed on a separate occasion. It is my hope that the Maine BCRS would be supportive of any group of people who - against all odds - stand up to oppression, terrorism, embargoes and U.S. imperialism for their sovereignty and independence. To highlight micro or smaller defects (which there always are in any society) of the Cuban people and/or government, is to miss the trees from the forest and does not do justice to the article or the Cuban people as a whole.

*Scott Lovaas  
Portland, Maine*

**"MS. KAPLAN RESPONDS"**

My article was written as a report of one person's recent experience, rather than as a comprehensive analysis of the Cuban revolution. The situation regarding repression of homosexuals (or political dissenters, for that matter) was not one that I was in a position to investigate, and therefore I cannot offer any first hand judgement. As I stated, however, the group of which I was a part did include gay men and lesbians, who apparently saw no problem in traveling to Cuba and having discussions with Cubans. I was left with the impression that the Cubans were sincerely interested in expanding contacts with North Americans, and I would encourage progressive social workers to see Cuba for themselves.

*Carol Kaplan  
Assistant Professor  
Fordham University*

**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 1992 BCRS MEETING AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK FORUMS**

The Forums are one of several pre-conference forums to be held prior to the World Assembly of the International Federation of Social Workers in Washington, D.C. in July, 1992. Various Coalition members and other sponsors are arranging for social workers from other countries to join us in the Forums and at the World Assembly. To date, we have arranged to sponsor social workers from South Africa, Tanzania, Argentina, Cambodia, and countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Council of International Programs (C.I.P.) is also sponsoring social workers to the Forums, and others, especially from Europe and Japan, are expected as well.

The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society will host a reception for the Forum participants on Friday night, June 26th, and there will be an open Steering Committee meeting on Sunday afternoon, June 28th. BCRS will also attempt to provide a listing of fairly inexpensive housing to members who prefer to be on their own.

We expect the Forums to be a valuable experience for BCRS members, but there is more. The Training Institutes, usually offered just before the annual membership meeting, are always very popular, and this time we will hold the Institutes after the Forums, on June 29th and 30th. The planned Institutes are:

- Coming Out As A Radical Social Worker
- Major Themes in the Life and Work of Bertha Reynolds
- Popular Economics
- Social Work Education: Training for the Development of Communal Thinking.

This last workshop will be a unique opportunity available only during these Institutes for some in-depth work with Ruth Teubal, Professor of Group Work and Community Organization at the School of Social Work, University of Buenos Aires. Dr. Teubal is on the cutting edge of social work education in Latin America, folding the intrapsychic theories of Pinchot-Riviere into the empowerment theories of Paolo Freire, exploring the dialectic relationship between the individual and the community. She will be in this country for only a few weeks, holding introductory workshops at the International Forums and the IFSW World Assembly and has agreed to conduct two in-depth workshops for BCRS. Space will be limited.

Because the Forums are a collaboration with several different groups, the bulk distribution of the Program will be to members within 200 miles of New York City. However, we want to make sure that BCRS members have access to the Program.

**IF YOU LIVE OUTSIDE THIS REGION AND ARE INTERESTED IN THE FORUMS, PLEASE SEND IN THE TEAR-OFF BELOW TO RECEIVE YOUR FORUMS PROGRAM.**

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Yes, I am interested in attending the 1992 NYC International Social Work Forums. Please send me the Conference Program with Workshop selections and registration.

To: International Social Work Forums  
545 8th Ave., 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10018  
212-316-3150

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Book Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ BCRS Member? \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE	QUANTITY	UNIT/PRICE	TOTAL
<b>Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work</b> 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	
<b>Social Work &amp; Social Living</b> 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	
<b>Between Client &amp; Community</b> 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	
<b>Uncharted Journey</b> 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	
<b>The Years Have Spoken</b> 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	
		<b>TOTAL</b>	
		<b>ADD 10% SHIPPING</b>	

**RETURN FORM TO:**

BCRS Book Fund  
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New York, NY 10023

## How To Organize A BCRS Chapter

"How to Organize a BCRS Chapter" organizing packets are available by contacting Tara Quillnan at Communication Services at (518) 463-3522, at 4 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 11210. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of BCRS organizers 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

Institutional/Organization  
Affiliation (optional)

Telephone  
(Home)

(Work)

**Please make your check payable to  
The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society  
and return to:**

**Bertha Capen Reynolds Society  
Columbus Circle Station  
P.O. Box 20563  
New York, NY 10023**

Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Inc.  
347 Wellington Road  
Delmar, NY 12054

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