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# Bonnie Bullough 1927–1996

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## Paul Kurtz

**H**umanists do not believe in an after-life; they hold that what endures of a person is the influence that, he or she has had on the minds and hearts of those who remain. Bonnie Bullough did not believe in the illusion of immortality. She thought that the best response to death is the reaffirmation of life.

She was a leader in several fields of creative endeavor: sexology, where along with Vern Bullough, her husband, she is considered one of the leading contributors to scholarly research; nursing, where she attempted to elevate the professional and scientific credibility of the field; and higher education, where she served with distinction as a teacher and administrator.

Bonnie Bullough also made significant contributions to the humanist movement; and she exemplified throughout her life the humanist outlook and humanist values. Indeed, Bonnie Bullough richly deserves an important place within the pantheon of humanist heroines and heroes. This honor is reserved for outstanding leaders of thought and action who have made extraordinary contributions to the humanist outlook.

Bonnie Bullough stands alongside other humanist heroines, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Margaret Sanger, and Simone de Beauvoir, who were on the barricades battling for women's rights. Bonnie was an active member of the Council for Secular Humanism and a Humanist Laureate of the International Academy of Humanism.

Born into a Mormon family and raised in conservative Utah, she broke with the church—which she found to be too authoritarian—and she proclaimed her own independence and freedom as an autonomous person. But at the same time, she attempted to develop an authentic humanist alternative and she eloquently espoused a set of humanist values. She cherished the right of self-determination, and believed that all per-

sons should be treated with equal dignity and value, no matter what their gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, or class. She fought for sexual equality—reproductive freedom, the right to abortion and contraception, and equality of opportunity for women. She also believed deeply in racial equality and indeed, she and Vern adopted two African-American children and one Korean child, and raised them with love and devotion.

Her global reputation as an ambassador for the humanist outlook is firmly established. Last year she traveled to Greece to help establish the Delphi Academy, and seven years ago she went to Moscow to take part in the first

Atheist/Humanist Dialogue. She and Vern traveled to Ghana to bring contraceptive information to women; they also went to Berlin, Beijing, Amsterdam, Toronto, and elsewhere, proclaiming the virtues of humanism.

Bonnie Bullough was a Promethean figure, in the best sense of that term—she was Prometheus unbound:

She challenged the Gods on high and the powers that be;

She fought injustice;

She was an inexhaustible reservoir of insight, always receptive to new ideas and new research;

She opposed hypocrisy and cant;

She could deflate any pompous professor or theologian;

Her barbs could enliven any academic assembly or congress;

She was a source of wisdom and wit.

Bonnie was a woman of great energy and drive. A brilliant mind, a creative genius, a wonderful person to know. We in the humanist movement cherish her memory and shall miss her. •

