

ANITA BERGER

PROVIDENCE - a classically trained psychotherapist and beloved mother, grandmother, and partner, died on July 12, 2022, at the age of 92.

Anita was widely known and respected as “the professional for professionals.” She was a brilliant analyst who helped generations of patients, including many professionals in medicine, academia, and other disciplines.

Though Anita may have struggled with geometry, she graduated cum laude from Brooklyn College and received recognition from the National Sociological Honor Society. She continued her educational career with a Masters in Clinical Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania and a postgraduate degree from the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry and the Postgraduate Center for Psychotherapy in New York City.

Anita was an experienced clinician and adult educator who worked with individuals, families and groups in both short and long term psychotherapy for over forty years. Her focus was to help a person or group to get beyond internal and external barriers, transforming capability, energy and talent into ability and a higher level of effectiveness.

After working as Assistant Professor at the State University of New York Buffalo Graduate School of Social Work from 1974-1975, Anita established a private practice in Providence in 1978, and was an Instructor in the Brown Learning Community at Brown University from 1988-1992 and 1998-2005. Her adult education classes at Brown University centered on the theory and practice of psychoanalytic psychology. In her later years, she taught classes on resilience and self-actualization, particularly for women.

Anita was deeply involved in her professional community. She was a Fellow of the New York State Society of Clinical Social Work Psychotherapists; a member of the National Association of Social Workers and the Rhode Island Group Psychotherapy Association, for which she served as president in 1988-1989; and was named Woman of the Year in 1984 by the Providence Business and Professional Women’s Organization.

Beyond her work in psychoanalysis, Anita was devoted to volunteering and political organizing. She received the Volunteer of the Year award by Rhode Island Business and Arts Council in 2003; was listed in Marquis’ Who’s Who as a noteworthy organizational consultant, psychotherapist, and adult educator; and served on the Board of Directors for Volunteers in Action in Providence from 1979-1985.

Anita was one of the founders of the Grammy Peace Brigade, a group of grandparents protesting the war in the Iraq; a member of the Rhode Island Advising Committee for the United States Commission on Civil Rights from 1981-1985; a representative to the Rhode Island Coalition Against Bigotry from 1982-1985; and a member of the Rhode Island Governor’s Advisory Commission on Women from 1982-1985.

“Anita’s presence was marked by the quiet diplomacy which made her a lifelong follower of Teddy Roosevelt’s motto: she spoke softly but carried the big stick of the passion behind her opinions,” says Barbara Estrin, a member of Anita’s Friday Group.

Monique Bertic-Cohen, also of the Friday Group, adds: “Anita’s loyalty was beyond measure to her family, friends, and patients. She cared deeply and always made you feel special. She was proud of her Bronx roots and often reminded us that she was a ‘Bronx Girl.’” Anita had excellent taste in art, furniture, and clothing. She was an exceptional shopper who could hold her own from Barney’s to Savers. She had an avid eye for elegance, and a devotion to graciousness. She always added orange juice to her brownie mix and chocolate cake.

Anita was preceded in death by her husband, Ramon Berger, in 1993 and by her daughter, Elizabeth Berger, in 2014. She is survived by her son, Gideon Berger, her partner of fifteen years, Calvin Oyer, and her two grandchildren, Phoebe and Julian Kaufman. She will be dearly missed for her individuality, her wit, her love, and her strength.



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