

# HUMANISTS IN ACTION

Many humanists believe that the **responsibility** for making the world a better place lies with human beings alone. We cannot expect help to come from elsewhere. There is no other life in which injustices will be put right. For humanists, justice needs to be worked for in the **here and now**. That means wishing and hoping are not enough – we need to take **action**.



**JAMES BALDWIN**,  
author

'The world is before you and you need not take it or leave it as it was before you came in.'

Credit: Allan Warren

## HUMANISTS FROM HISTORY

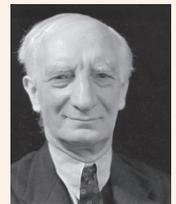
**TERESA BILLINGTON-GREIG** was a suffragette and co-founder of the Women's Freedom League in 1907, which campaigned for votes for women and sexual equality.

*'I desire to see woman free and human; I seek the complete emancipation from all shackles of law and custom, from all chains of sentiment and superstition.'*



**WILLIAM BEVERIDGE** wrote, in 1942, the report that invented the welfare state – this protected people's economic and social wellbeing and created the national health service.

*'The object of government in peace and in war is not the glory of rulers or of races, but the happiness of the common man.'*



**BROCK CHISHOLM** was the first Director-General of the World Health Organisation from 1948 to 1954. He dedicated his life to the idea of sustainable development and an improved world, especially through education.

*'Unless we are very careful, very careful indeed... there is a great danger that our children may turn out to be the same kind of people we are.'*



**ASA PHILIP RANDOLPH** was a civil rights leader who campaigned for racial equality in the workplace. He organised the March on Washington in 1963 at which Martin Luther King delivered his 'I have a dream' speech.

*'This condition of freedom, equality, and democracy is not the gift of gods. It is the task of men, yes, men, brave men, honest men, determined men.'*



**SYLVIA SCAFFARDI** was the co-founder of the National Council for Civil Liberties (today Liberty). She campaigned to challenge injustice and promote human rights, including the right to peaceful protest.

*'I had to be adult, to accept what I had always postponed, responsibility.'*



**JENNIE LEE** created the Open University in 1969, dedicated to widening access to a university education.

*'An open university in Great Britain's circumstances today is not a dream, is not a luxury: it has become an urgent necessity.'*



Credit: Walter Bird, National Portrait Gallery

Humanist organisations tend to focus on specific goals to which they can make a unique contribution, often relating to freedom of religion and belief, equal treatment of the non-religious, and ethical issues where the non-religious voice might be less well heard. That is where they believe they can best make a specific contribution towards human rights.

However, individual humanists' concerns may be much wider. Humanists can be found actively campaigning for human welfare, peace, democracy, education, and the protection of the environment, and against poverty, violence, and injustice. Humanists will differ in their priorities. However, they believe each of us can contribute in some way.

## HUMANISTS TODAY

**NAOMI PHILLIPS** has worked in the charity sector for over 15 years, most recently at the British Red Cross, working to support people in crisis around the world.

*'What I really care about are meeting the needs of individual people, helping create the conditions for people to live really good lives of their own choosing, and to be free from unnecessary oppression or unequal treatment.'*



**GULALAI ISMAIL** is a human rights activist who campaigns for women's rights in Pakistan. She founded Aware Girls, a charity that supports women to become better aware of their human rights and works to improve girls' access to education.

*'One of my humanistic values which has inspired me to work for human rights is that when I leave the world, I want to leave it in a better shape. I don't want the generations that come after me to face the same kind of challenges that my generation has been facing.'*



**BOB SCOTT** is part of a team of volunteers for StreetCare Scotland who run soup kitchens, deliver food, and provide companionship to the homeless in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

*'Each of us comes away from a session feeling that the time has been very well spent... It is a stimulating and rewarding way to spend an evening.'*



**SHARON BOOTH** is the founder and director of Solutions Not Sides, a charity that works to support young people to better understand the Israel-Palestine dilemma. She provides opportunities for humanising encounters with those with different perspectives.

*'It is very hard to keep hating a whole group of people when you have met even just one person from that group with whom you experience empathy and a human connection.'*



**PHIL WALDER** is a member of Humanist Climate Action and campaigns for the protection of the environment and greener lifestyles.

*'Humanists, by definition, are guided by science and recognise a moral duty towards the welfare of our fellow beings and the natural world. This leads many humanists to believe they have a duty to protect nature's diversity and beauty in a secure and sustainable manner.'*



**PETER TATCHELL** is a human rights activist who campaigns for equal rights for LGBT people. He ran the Equal Love campaign, which helped to introduce same-sex marriage. In the 1970s he proposed an Equal Rights Act to ensure non-discrimination for everyone. Such a proposal was finally secured with the Equality Act in 2010.

*'Don't accept the world as it is. Dream of what the world could be – and then help make it happen.'*

