



ATD

FOURTH WORLD

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER



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Fall News 2016

BUILDING SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE MOVING AROUND THE WORLD

October 17 is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (learn more at www.overcomingpoverty.org). The theme of this official United Nations Day this year was “Moving from humiliation and exclusion to participation: Ending poverty in all its forms.” Among the groups that are often excluded from our mainstream society are people moving from their original country to a new country, such as immigrants and refugees.

People move from their home country to a new country, where a new life can be very challenging, in hopes of safety and better conditions of life. Despite the fact that they may not have a secure legal status, immigrants and refugees, who often live in poverty in their new homes, are a big part of the forces that build the country. Often times, their abilities and contributions are not recognized. It’s important to recognize that, in addition to the contributions they make to advancing society, immigrants have the capacity to be advocates for their families and communities and to build collaborations between their countries of origin and destination.

Marlon Wallen, ATD Fourth World activist who was also one of the speakers at this year’s commemoration at the United Nations, claims that we need to respect people’s instinct to survive and their hope for a better future. He argues that, “*when we value people, we make them participatory citizens.*” Solutions to conflicts that arise from immigration and refugee situations cannot be discussed without immigrants’ and refugees’ voices. Their participation is necessary in resolving problems, finding pathways to citizenship, and building a more inclusive society.

In speaking of this year’s theme, the International Committee for October 17 wrote that “*effective and meaningful participation is not only the right of every individual and group to take part in public affairs, but it also promotes social inclusion and ensures that policies to combat poverty in all its forms are sustainable and respect the true needs and human dignity of people in poverty.*” Situations of poverty and insecurity at home are often part of the reason people move to a new country. Those situations are not always better in the new home and additional challenges such as language, cultural adaptations, and legal status can continue to hinder full participation and inclusion in a community. Ending poverty in all its forms includes valuing immigrants’ as participatory citizens.

The movement of people has been constant throughout history. By moving from humiliation and exclusion to participation, we can make it a new opportunity of increased understanding and solidarity among all the people around the world.

Group photo at the United Nations on October 17





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Fifty years with ATD Fourth World Movement



I have been asked to reflect on my fifty-year involvement with ATD Fourth World Movement. This piece could be a list of events; rather, I think of it as a love letter. I am glad to have contributed to the work of the Movement in various ways, but the Movement has given me more than I have given back.

I have learned that extreme poverty is social exclusion and a denial of human rights. This learning did not come quickly or easily, but I had good teachers and the powerful writings of our founder, Father Joseph Wresinski. I expect to learn more from the current project to identify indicators of poverty.

I have met hundreds of dedicated people in the Movement (members experiencing poverty, ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps members, supporters and allies), many of whom have become friends. I have belonged to groups in education, church, politics, athletics, and social change. Of all of them, the group that I admire most is the Permanent Volunteer Corps of ATD Fourth World. I had the pleasure and honor to meet the founder of ATD Fourth World, Joseph Wresinski, several times. His personal power was almost overwhelming, but the power was contagious. At the great human rights rally organized by ATD Fourth World in Brussels in 1982, he spoke of those living poverty as a people, “my people.” Geneviève Anthonioz DeGaulle, former President of ATD Fourth World France and a holocaust survivor spoke at a seminar in Pierrelaye (France) and named the three steps of action that she learned in the Catholic Youth Movement: *see injustice, say “no” to it, act to correct it*. The Movement acts on that model, but always involves the suffering ones in the diagnosis and the action. I had the chance to read a book with a six-year-old on a doorstep in New Orleans. His delight in understanding and telling me so was precious.

I have enjoyed translating and helping with publications. Volunteer Corps member Moya Amateau proofread *Children of Our Time* in my dining room. She worked for hours and never accepted anything but black coffee. My translation into English of Joseph Wresinski’s 1981 speech to friends from Africa has been used in training new Volunteer Corps members. I translated his Bicentennial of the French Revolution speech on the indivisibility of human rights, then developed that thinking in an article published by the World Bank. I helped find publishers for *Artisans of Democracy* and *The Poor Are the Church*. Several of my talks for academic audiences have discussed the Movement.

I’ve written about things that I have experienced or done. I will conclude this love letter with something that I did not do. Father Joseph has been proposed for sainthood in the Roman Catholic Church. Miracles are required for sainthood. Several years ago during a General Assembly of the Movement an evening was dedicated to Father Joseph. People from many countries and many parts of society attended and testified to his person and work. I sat there thinking, “*This is a miracle. No one else has changed lives in this way.*” I should have told the Vatican of that miracle.

Thank you, ATD Fourth World Movement. Je vous embrasse.

Charles Courtney, Former President of Board of Directors



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Healthcare for Families Isolated in Appalachia

In the coal-fields of southwest Virginia, access to healthcare is very limited. ATD Fourth World in Appalachia has worked with Remote Area Medical (RAM) since it first came to Wise County in 1999 at the initiative of Sister Bernie Kenny. RAM takes place in this remote area one weekend every summer, and brings free healthcare and medical exams to over 2000 people.

Scott Nobbe spent several months working with ATD Fourth World and learning about the ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps and projects around the United States. Natalie Artignan has been an ally of ATD Fourth World for many years. She spent several weeks this summer supporting the team in Appalachia as well. She writes about some of the people she interacted with at RAM and how each person, including 8 year-old Micah, has something important to contribute. Read their discoveries and reflections on this community event!



Scott's reflections and discoveries: RAM's mission, as advertised on their website, is to prevent pain and alleviate suffering. ATD Fourth World holds a vision of a world without poverty, where everyone has equal opportunity to access all human rights. RAM is international as is ATD Fourth World. RAM's founder, Stan Brock began trying to address the needless pain and suffering caused by the lack of healthcare in impoverished, underserved, and isolated areas. ATD Fourth World founder, Joseph Wresinski, began by trying to address the needless pain and suffering of 250 families placed in an emergency housing camp. And both entities are constantly on the move.

This annual event is more than just a three day "pop up" medical clinic that takes place in five different Virginia counties each year. RAM's yearly event in Wise, Virginia sees thousands of local citizens who rely on the no-cost clinic for all of their health care needs. The ATD Fourth World Appalachia team's involvement from setup to tear down continues to be an important aspect of its ongoing presence, primarily as an act of service to RAM and to the people they serve over the course of the clinic.



Because I was present throughout the week of setting up, I was fortunate to witness the steady progression and transformation that took place at the site through the assistance of many different groups from different parts of Virginia and from across the country. I met people from as far away as New Mexico specifically here to help out in whatever capacity was necessary because they believed in what RAM was doing. I lost count of the amount of tents we put up to be used by the medical teams or just to provide shelter from the sun for those waiting to be seen. Each day, more RAM trucks, trailers and RV's arrived and positioned themselves strategically within the county fairground setting. And peppered throughout the grounds were organizations promoting various health products, offering health seminars, providing tests for one disease or another or giving away goods such as clothing or hygiene products. There was even a spiritual revival taking place the entire time.

This is what I discovered. I discovered that the need is excessive both in number and the extent of the services requested. I discovered that after all the medical services were completed RAM registered 2111 patients and provided just over \$2.1 million in services. Some of those registered slept in their cars the night before as they drove several hours for the event. And I discovered just how important it was for the medical volunteers to be here to witness the need. As one dental volunteer stated, *"All one needs to do is come to one of these clinics and they will see there is something seriously wrong with healthcare in America."*

Throughout the clinic as I interacted with children and adults who came to our modest tent in the midst of all the hustle and bustle, I was reminded, as I am with each ATD Fourth World engagement, that we are not in the habit of judging, or making comparisons. Rather, wherever we are, we believe we are doing good because we treat all people as unique persons who have something to offer, we provide a safe place for mutual and meaningful dialogue and we find ways to promote the person within. These are the intangibles that bring dignity and respect to those whom both RAM and ATD Fourth World serve.



Natalie's observations and lesson learned

Among the people who had slept in their cars the day before medical exams began, there was 8 year-old Micah. His great-grandmother had brought him all the way from Tennessee to get him glasses. I met Micah when he and his great-grandmother sat down with us at ATD Fourth World's tent, apparently happy to see faces that they recognized from previous years. Young Micah asked to make a rubber band bracelet that he delicately placed around his great-grandmother's wrist. He then offered to help another woman passing by who asked where book bags were being given out. He took the time to lead her across the entire fairground, going at her pace, which was quite slow as she was using a walker.

Seeing these great family relationships and the many ways in which people support each other during the RAM event made it clear to me that, in addition to necessary healthcare, we all need to feel useful and connected to one another.



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REAL RESEARCH, REAL ASPECTS OF POVERTY, REAL SOLUTIONS

What is the best way to understand and identify the multi-faceted realities of poverty? How about a research process that involves people who have a lived experience of that reality and other experts in poverty eradication policy and best practice development? This is exactly the Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty (MAP) project that ATD Fourth World is undertaking in collaboration with Oxford University (England) Professor of Social Policy Robert Walker.

The Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty* research will happen in 7 countries. Three-year projects in Bangladesh, France, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom will be the main research sites while smaller scale satellite projects in Bolivia, the Ukraine, and the United States will carry out similar research that augments the overall findings. A research team will be based in New York City and through the Merging of Knowledge approach coordinate research groups in New York City, Boston, Oakland (CA), and possible other sites.

The Merging of Knowledge approach has been developed by ATD Fourth World over the last 20 years and recognizes people with a direct experience of poverty as co-researchers alongside academics and practitioners. It's an approach that prioritizes the experiences and knowledge of people with a lived experience of poverty, recognizes the diversity of those experiences, and permits all participants (people with lived experience of poverty, academics, practitioners, and others) to work in a nonjudgmental setting while doing critical and in-depth research.

Here in the United States, working groups of people with an experience of poverty, other groups of academic researchers, and other groups of practitioners in poverty eradication programs will work within their "peer groups" to determine different aspects of poverty. The findings of these peer groups will then have the opportunity to be enhanced by the work of the others through a Merging of Knowledge Seminar where representatives from the different groups meet and work together later next year. This seminar will take the findings of the peer groups, and through merging and confronting those findings, aim to construct more fully informed findings to the multidimensional aspects of poverty in the United States.

To get this participative research off the ground, a Merging of Knowledge methodology training in New York City will kick off the project on December 3-4, 2016. It will include 25 participants from St. Mary's Center in Oakland (www.stmaryscenter.org), ATD Fourth World groups in Boston and New York City, as well as others ready to employ the Merging of Knowledge practices in their daily work.

This project will implement a research model where people with a direct experience of poverty have a voice in defining what poverty is in order to contribute to the global thinking on poverty eradication. It will help the United Nations and other international and national institutions reach the UN goal of "eliminating all forms of poverty by 2030". The dimensions and aspects of poverty defined in this research project will help policy makers develop projects that address the right problems, design more effective programs, and then evaluate, hopefully with people experiencing poverty, if those efforts are working.

We know that the people most directly impacted by the realities of poverty are best placed to identify and help us understand the many dimensions and aspects of poverty. This unique research project offers an opportunity to truly incorporate that expertise and build relevant and successful efforts.

** This is the current name of the project in the United States. Internationally it is also called Determining the Dimensions of Poverty and How to Measure Them.*