

ATD FOURTH WORLD 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

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Dear friends,

As the year comes to an end, we often look back to remember what it entailed. This year may be an exception though. We might just want to turn the page and open a new chapter; avoid being confronted again with challenges this year brought each of us. Looking back or not is up to each of us, but either way it might be useful to ask ourselves what it is we will bring, as individuals and as a community, into 2021.

I will bring some words from Stacy, an activist in New York: *"Before I came to ATD Fourth World I was a turtle in a shell. ... Now I have a voice, now I say something. ... I stand up for my community. Being with ATD has shown me that I don't have to know my neighbors personally to stand up for them. ... Now it's up to me to speak out in my community and other communities when I see something wrong or hear something wrong or not going right."*

I could hear pride in her words - the pride of having found her own voice, the pride of belonging to the ATD Fourth World community, the pride of acting for justice. I will step into the new year inspired by this pride. Yes, despite everything life throws with so much violence at some of us, we are this movement together.

You could ask why, among the many possible emotions, I would choose pride to face the challenges of 2021. Because pride is a concrete and positive answer to the humiliation of poverty. As many of us know, poverty is a double punishment. First, because the situations people live in are the most underserved. And second, because the same people are blamed for their own poverty and then locked in it. Pride is the key to overcome the latter, and to open the way to concrete, material change. As Patrick, an activist, told me: *"Poverty is a question of keys. If you have the right keys, then you can open the doors."* Pride is one of those right keys, it unlocks one's inner strength.

Stacy reminds me that affirming one's self-worth makes us and the people around us, proud - and that's the first step to overcome poverty.

As an ATD Fourth World community we go through a lot together, and it's difficult to always feel this pride and self worth when life is hard. Together we take pride in the achievements but also in the efforts and personal resistance, even when they go unrecognized. A father in Burkina Faso once told me, *"I have efforts in my heart that nobody sees, not even my children, but they are here and that's what keeps me going."*

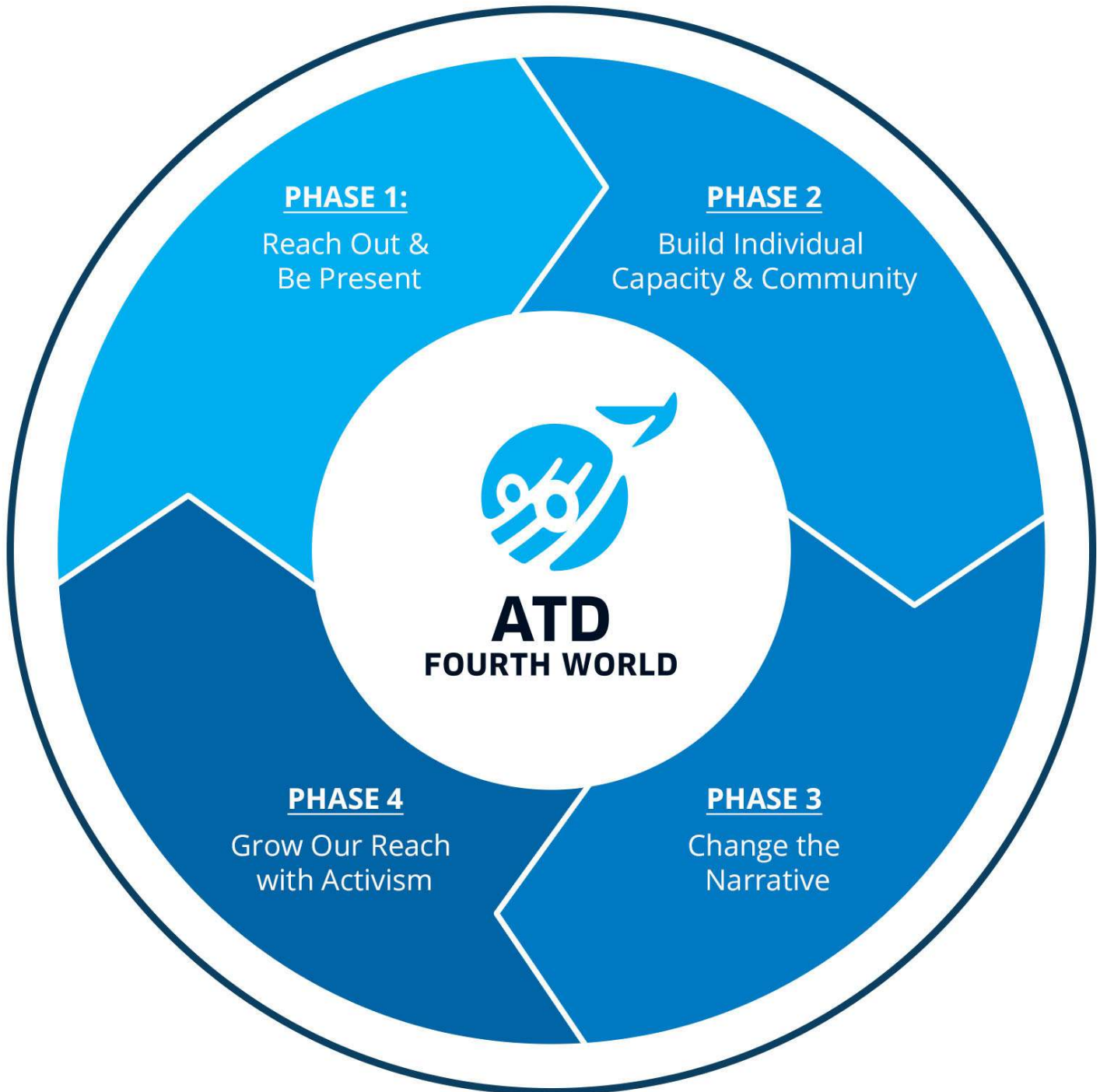
As a community, we do our best to recognize those efforts and to support them so we can all keep going. When one of us is too tired or disheartened, we will take their hand to keep moving together.

Thanks to many of you, these are the sources of pride I will bring with me to face 2021. They will keep me going. And you, what will you bring into this new year?

Always in solidarity,



Guillaume Charvon
National Director



ATD Fourth World projects and actions are shaped by our goals: building relationships with people in poverty that are transformative for themselves, their community, for our organization, and for our society at large. Rooted in a strong culture of reflective practice, what we do is constantly evolving, a particular need and strength this past year. Over time and at different moments, the movement between all four phases creates the conditions for the knowledge and experience of people living in poverty to lead our actions in overcoming the injustices of poverty.

Highlights from this past year give examples of the goals, work involved, and impacts within each phase.

PHASE 1: REACH OUT & BE PRESENT

Outreach and relationship building with people in a community whose lives are most impacted by the injustices of poverty.

A fundamental base for ATD Fourth World's way of working is to be present with the people in a community facing the hardest aspects of poverty. Preparation, outreach and the reflective practices that Story Garden teams carry out was happening as part of the weekly activities in early 2020, but was forced to change with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

All of a sudden, being physically present with one another was not allowed or helpful in addressing the pandemic. At the same time the isolation of poverty was intensifying for many families. We knew that reaching out and the commitment to being there was more important than ever, but knowing how to do that remotely was hard and unsettling. Story Garden team members from New Mexico and New York thought through, talked about, and worked together to find the new ways to move forward.

They reached out by phone, text, social media, and post mail as much as possible at the beginning. Over time, mailing packages with art materials and messages from other children gave way to visiting the neighborhoods. Parents gave advice and guidance along the way and eventually Story Gardens resumed in safe ways. The pandemic is still affecting the daily lives of children and their families in uncertain ways. Story Garden teams will continue adapting, developing a Mobile Story Garden in the rural areas around Gallup, NM and through one-on-one activities with families in New York City throughout the winter months.

PHASE 2: BUILD INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY & COMMUNITY

People stepping into their power and by doing so changing the community. Develop community projects open to all but focused on the involvement of people and families who will benefit most from participating.

"I was more of a listener. I was listening and asking questions. And the more I listened and asked questions, ATD opened up to me ... what I got from them is open arms. I can go there and talk with them without being judged, and if I need help I can get help." This is how Stacy speaks about her first interactions with ATD Fourth World after being invited by a friend.

Stacy started attending the Fourth World People's University meetings, is now on the team that prepares those meetings, and has spoken publicly at the United Nations and universities in New York City. She describes how through her involvement she has gained strength to speak for herself and for her community:

"We don't do that [speak out] in the poverty area because we're so afraid of getting shut down, and not being heard. So with ATD I know: you're not going to shut me down, because I'm a big part of a movement that you cannot shut down. So that's where the strength comes from. ... It's like moving a mountain, and you can't move me. You can't tell me I can't exercise my human rights, because I have mountains behind me which is ATD."

This strength, support, and determination helped Stacy secure an apartment for her family and impacts her involvement with ATD Fourth World and in her community today:

"Sometimes it takes one voice to start it off, then everything else will trickle, will come down the line. [Others] start speaking up if they know that one person is speaking up."

PHASE 3: CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

Collective knowledge influences local and national policies and practices to contribute to long term sustainable solutions to poverty.

In the United States, several non-partisan think tanks are leading the way to advocate for better anti-poverty policies. Based in Washington, DC and with a national scope, The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and The Center for Law and Social Policy are two of them. Last year the Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty (MAP) report ended up on their desks triggering an interest in ATD Fourth World's work and expertise. Each agency decided to organize a series of workshops led by ATD Fourth World to learn more about how to engage people experiencing poverty in research and advocacy in their own work. Postponed because of the pandemic, this training finally happened online this fall.

One participant remarked: *"I think in general there has been a shift and a recognition that if organizations were to embody equity, that would mean thinking differently about engaging the community in a more authentic way."*

This message, which ATD Fourth World has been promoting for decades, is more timely than ever. We have no doubt that this training will positively impact how advocacy and research on poverty are conducted at the national level. By influencing the practice of other actors through training, ATD Fourth World contributes to fostering the recognition of people experiencing poverty as valuable partners in designing more effective social policies.

PHASE 4: GROW OUR REACH WITH ACTIVISM

Community activism with and from people with an experience of poverty who have been part of programs and previous phases, reaching out to others deeply impacted by poverty and building a new cycle of programs with them from phase one.

The impacts of individual work are enhanced and reach farther when they happen alongside others' efforts towards the same goals. Joining the community by contributing to initiatives other agencies and individuals make to strengthen their community for all people is a purposeful way ATD Fourth World programs are built and develop.

For the past several years members of the ATD Fourth World team in Gallup, NM, have been actively involved in a coalition concerned about the well-being of children and families in McKinley County and the surrounding region. When the Covid-19 pandemic imposed closures and travel restrictions this spring, families in McKinley County and Navajo Nation were hit hard. Activists with this coalition initiated a new group, McKinley Mutual Aid, to mobilize around the distribution of food and household supplies to families who couldn't get to the resources they needed.

Esther is an activist and facilitator with our ATD Fourth World Team in Gallup and spent months volunteering with the McKinley Mutual Aid food and supply distribution. With Esther's unique knowledge and close relationship to many families who were isolated and struggling, she was able to bring needed supplies to families, while focusing on reconnecting with them and giving them encouragement in an uplifting and dignified way. Thanks to Esther's eagerness to bring opportunities to more families, the team is now planning a Story Garden space with a new family introduced by Esther. Esther's involvement with this community program expanded the impact it has, growing the activism and opening new doors for other actors in the community, while helping develop ATD Fourth World's actions in a meaningful way.

2020 Happenings



Side-event panel at the Commission for Social Development - United Nations, New York



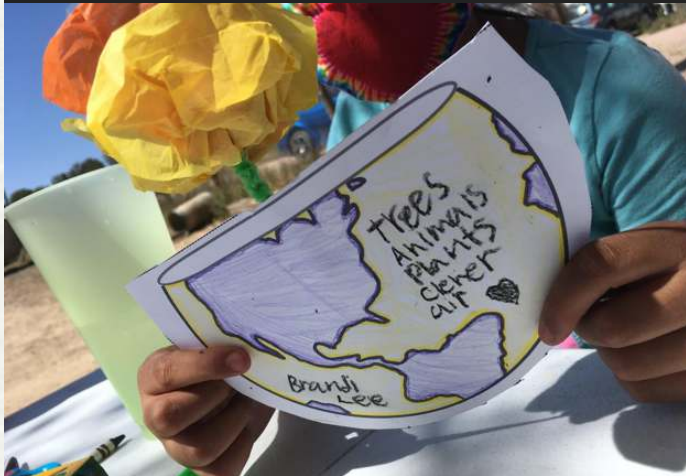
Adoption of the Massachusetts House Resolution recognizing the Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty - MA State House, Boston



Fourth World People's University - New York City



Mobile Story Garden - Gallup, NM



Mobile Story Garden - outside Gallup, NM



Story Garden - Brownsville, Brooklyn



Participatory Professional Training session in a university classroom - The New School, New York City