MAP: HOW RESEARCH GROWS

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

"The world transforms one person at a time.

Dear Friends,

Today, many people, movements, and organizations are efficiently working toward building systemic changes that will end all forms of racial, social and economic discrimination. As a movement rooted in the dignity of all human beings that strives to contribute to a society where everyone can belong and participate, what does it mean to be actors for positive change?

First and foremost, it means to keep looking for the ones that are so marginalized that the reality of their experience is unknown to the mainstream. It means to be present in disadvantaged areas to bring learning opportunities like ATD Fourth World does in rural New Mexico or in New York City through the Story Garden. It also means just being here for people, available to meet with them, cultivating a presence that enables relationships to be established and to grow. **Systemic change starts with taking small steps locally and building empowering relationships. The world transforms one person at a time.**

However, as ATD Fourth World, we know by experience that there is a bigger picture. As participants in the MAP Research project explained, *"When you live in poverty, you are always under somebody's thumb."* The way our society works is designed to keep some of us in a *"constant phase of being below."* What we learn from transformative relationships must be a leverage for a wider opportunity for change.

ATD Fourth World is disseminating its expertise to create a ripple effect. We are building partnerships around the country with like-minded organizations that have much bigger capacities to impact national policies. By being trained by ATD Fourth World on how to center the voices and knowledge of people the most impacted by poverty in their research and advocacy, organizations as diverse as the Aspen Institute and the Center for Law and Social Policy, multiply the impact of our knowledge, making it actionable at a national level in a win-win partnership.

This approach to systemic change is also what ATD Fourth World is about: None of us can do much alone, but if **many people come together around the knowledge of the most impacted and relay their expertise at every level of our society, then systemic change is already on the way.**

ATD Fourth World keeps being active at the grassroots level and is also building strong partnerships to transmit what is learned at a national level. This newsletter will give you a closer look on how this strategy is playing out. We hope you find some renewed strength in knowing that the small steps you take in your community to respect the dignity of everyone is also part of something bigger.

Have a beautiful summer.

In solidarity,

Guillaume Charvon

MAP: How Research Grows from Report to Training Guide

The Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty (MAP) Research was the U.S. component of an international project conducted from 2016 to 2019 in six countries. Using a research approach called Merging of Knowledge, over 20 peer groups were organized in six areas across the United States, ranging from major metropolitan areas like New York City and Oakland, to rural areas like Appalachia and Gallup, New Mexico.
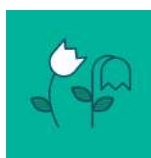
The result is a new approach to understanding poverty by looking at nine key aspects of poverty:

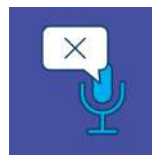| Subjugation	Disadvantaged Areas	Stigma & Shame	Lack of Adequate Health and Well-being	Resources

| Work and Employment-Related Hardships	Social Isolation	Unrecognized Voice & Participation	The Struggle

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH MAP NOW?

- Since completing the research, we've used the results in the Merging of Knowledge Training we offer. This training is on how to set the conditions for equitable participation of the most excluded and historically underrepresented populations in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies that affect their lives and communities.
- To date, we have provided these training sessions for
  - The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
  - The Center for Law and Social Policy
  - The Aspen Institute
  - The Vermont Department for Children and Families Office of Economic Opportunity
  - The Board of Health for the city of Medford, Massachusetts
- We have also trained graduate-level social worker students at
  - Columbia University
  - Fordham University
  - Harvard University
  - The New School
  - The University of Indiana

Read the full MAP report here: **http://map.4thworldmovement.org**

FROM THE TRAINER

Maryann Broxton, ATD Fourth World Activist,
MAP Research Coordinator and Lead Merging of Knowledge Trainer,
updated us on these training sessions.
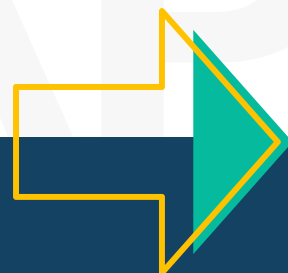
WHAT IS THE TRAINING ABOUT?

- *There are two main parts to this training:*
  - *Giving a grounding in **what the dimensions of poverty** are, as seen by people living with direct experience and others in the United States.*
  - *We share the **methodology** and how it was created. Because this isn't like past research that's usually been purely extractive where people, academics, statisticians, economists, talk to people, extract their knowledge and turn it into what they think poverty is. In the Merging of Knowledge methodology, people are naming it for themselves.*

HOW DO YOU PUT THESE INTO PRACTICE?

- *We have a training that focuses on - now that you have these dimensions, and you have an idea of the methodology, **how do you put that methodology into practice?** And to actually work with people: What are the conditions that you can set to make sure that people with direct experience can show up and participate actively, that it's equitable, that it's respectful, to create a space for people to share their voice, and for people's voices to be heard? As opposed to just showing up, as has been done before in the past, where, oh, this is the token person in poverty that's going to show up and talk about it. But no, how can they give meaningful input to help create cultural change?*
- *How do we **look at the dimensions in real world application?** What we'd like people to do is use them as a guide. If you're going to measure something, and we want to talk about what is already currently existing, you talk about, for example, Disadvantaged Areas. And then think about who is at the table when we're talking about these things. How can we create a space to make sure that it is equitable, and everybody's voice is heard?*
- *We also talk about language a lot - the language that we use, and how it changes the narratives and it sets the narratives, the way that language can also be a form of subjugation, that can dehumanize people. For example:*
  - *We talk about using "the homeless," "the poor," how it just strips away people's humanity and dignity. And once that happens, it's easier to marginalize and subjugate them, you know, and just deny them everything.*
  - *We talk a lot, people, society, talks a lot about "vulnerable populations" or "vulnerable communities," which takes the responsibility away from other actors, from systems and institutions and policies, and places it on the person: that they're not strong enough, so they're vulnerable. Instead, what we should be talking about is realizing that people become vulnerable because they're marginalized. And they're marginalized through the process of subjugation.*

WHY ARE THESE TRAININGS NEEDED?

- ***People in poverty know how policy works in actuality as opposed to how it's supposed to work on paper.***
- *Why not have people start from the very beginning, working with the people most affected? The dimensions show a true clear picture of what people are experiencing, where people go. Because people can name these situations for themselves, if you give them an opportunity and a time and a space to sit there and think critically about what's affecting them. And if we give them more time, they can probably come up with ideas of how to fix it.*
- *I'm a qualitative researcher, you know, and when I work with people that are academics or within institutions, I remind them that **each one of those data points is a person.** And each one of those people have experiences, and so not to leave them out. And the idea is, we have to ask ourselves better questions.… **We can use the dimensions as a guide to ask better questions, if we want to increase equity.***
- *When you are wanting to work with people with first-hand experience of poverty, it's not just "we're doing this meeting then we're done." No, meet with people, have dinner with them, share yourself too.*

If you know of a social agency or a school that might be interested in a Merging of Knowledge training,
please contact Maryann Broxton mbroxton@4thworldmovement.org.