



ATD FOURTH WORLD DEVELOPING TRUST

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER






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Letter from the National Director

ATD Fourth World members at Window Rock, capital of the Navajo Nation

Dear Friends,

The beginning of 2024 marks the start of my responsibility as ATD Fourth World USA’s new Executive Director and more importantly, 60 years since ATD Fourth World sent the first Volunteer Corps member to the United States. Over these 60 years, profound relationships of friendship and solidarity have been built with and amongst people and communities most isolated by persistent poverty. Generations of families who were shamed and discriminated against have formed the foundation of ATD Fourth World USA, supported and accompanied by ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps members and Allies. Space for their participation has been purposefully and carefully created, ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard. Many say that we have become one large family.

None of this would have been possible without a longstanding commitment to **building trust**. Trust is at the core of everything ATD Fourth World does. Community cannot be built without trusting one another. Trust is needed at all levels of society, and even more so when involving families constantly experiencing poverty, shame and humiliation.

Institutional maltreatment emerged as one dimension from the Hidden Dimensions of Poverty research led by ATD Fourth World and Oxford University. Historical trauma from government intervention into the lives of people in excluded and marginalized communities, particularly people of color, and lack of governmental accountability to remedy the wrongdoing, has fractured the trust between institutions and the people they are meant to serve. You can read more about this concept of

subjugation in the report that came from the research about dimensions of poverty: *Pushed to the Bottom: the Experience of Poverty in the US*. (<https://atdfourthworld-usa.org/map-download-the-report>)

To break these cycles of oppression and isolation, meaningful participation is the key. For children and adults to participate, the first step is to feel safe, in a trustworthy environment. A place where they will not be judged or instrumentalized. A place where they can be who they want to be, express themselves freely, have their experience truly contribute, and become activists defending their rights and those of their communities.

From creating safe spaces for children to discover their strengths and identity, to building intentional participatory spaces for adults in the community, ATD Fourth World is committed to supporting and standing alongside those whose opinions and thoughts are usually never considered. For true democracy to exist, the voices of all, especially the most excluded, must be fully included. We have been grateful for your generous support allowing our work to expand in the last 60 years. We hope you continue the journey with us.

Thank you,

Monica Jahangir
Executive Director
ATD Fourth World USA



(Learn more about our new leadership team here: atdfourthworld-usa.org/latest-news/nlt2024)

Developing Trust: Merging of Knowledge

Solutions to poverty require the full participation, from development through implementation to evaluation, of people with firsthand experience of poverty. Therefore, every project of ATD Fourth World, from grassroots to the United Nations, begins by developing trust with people who experience the subjugation and oppression of poverty and have good reason to be wary of anyone wanting to "help."

Merging of Knowledge develops trust. This philosophy and methodology, created by ATD Fourth World to bring different experiences and expertise together in collective knowledge, forms an environment of respect, trust, and patience. Merging of Knowledge recognizes that inclusive processes lead to transformational change. As a philosophy, Merging of Knowledge is integral to all we do. As a methodology, it includes those who fight poverty in their own lives as we all seek understanding and solutions. Merging of Knowledge generates an environment where all participants can trust in and feel secure with each other and within discussions.

Merging of Knowledge requires:



Being Present: to break through years of isolation and ostracization.



Confidentiality: to recognize that the wisdom of people's experience of poverty often grows out of vulnerability.



Time: to build confidence.



Active Listening: to be truly heard requires respecting what the other says and being willing to be critical about one's own knowledge and ideas.



Preparation: to develop a collective way to speak about individual experiences.

Connections matter. How you interact with a person matters. Connection is the stem of trust. If I can connect with you, I can gain some trust with you.

- Diamond LeGendre, 21-year-old Brownsville, Brooklyn resident & Emcee for the 2023 U.N. Commemoration for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Developing Trust at FWPU (New York)

The Fourth World People's University (FWPU) is a forum where individuals from diverse backgrounds learn from each other about an issue related to poverty. Participants include professionals and academics working in fields related to the issue, ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps members, and people with lived experience of poverty and social exclusion who often lack opportunities to voice their perspectives. At FWPU, every voice is heard, solidarity is fostered, and collective solutions are created.

Trust-building is fundamental at FWPU. Each series is intentionally designed to progressively cultivate trust among diverse participants. Preparation sessions are needed to build relationships, using these tools:



Icebreakers: to allow participants to introduce themselves and share personal experiences in a way where everyone feels equal.



Mixed Groups (with and without experience of poverty): to encourage participants to share their experiences and formulate ideas collectively. This helps everyone discover that despite different backgrounds, one individual's experience can resonate significantly with others' and that more elements bring us together than set us apart.



Peer Groups (separated based on experience of poverty): to think about specific situations related to the topic.



Collective Knowledge Building: to instill a sense of ownership and foster collaboration in order to collectively generate ideas for building a better society for everyone, based on common themes that emerge in conversations.



Developing Trust at the Gallup Flea Market (New Mexico)

In New Mexico, trust is layered slowly as the bedrock of authentic relationships. Gallup and the surrounding environs continue to endure centuries of mistrust — treaties broken, contracts ignored, and institutions masking corruption as service. Yet, here ATD Fourth World's ability to develop trust has thrived. These are elements that have built trust with the community around Story Garden at the Gallup Flea Market:



Partnership: ATD Fourth World developed a partnership with University of New Mexico - Gallup North Campus. Traditional wisdom was honored, neighbors were respected, and time was spent with Navajo Elders.



Presence: Because many institutional employees are temporary, residents hesitate to trust new arrivals. ATD Fourth World's sustained quality of attention established a dependable presence.



Place: The Gallup Flea Market is at the heart of the regional hub, ideal for ATD Fourth World's commitment to local families and communities. *Life* is found at the market: food and tools and healing herbs. Story Garden has become an antidote to mistrust in an environment where languages, cultures and traditions freely flow and mingle, unconstrained by bureaucracies.



Humility and Respect: "Outsiders" come to Gallup as "experts with answers." ATD Fourth World members arrived from elsewhere, yet entered humbly, with open hearts, responding to local traditions and cultures with respect, honoring the community's wisdom, and offering sincere support and encouragement, laying a solid foundation of trust.



My three grandkids really like (the Gamerco) Story Garden. They like to do arts and crafts. When I take them on Saturday to the Flea Market, they want to stay at the Story Garden, so I leave them there while I go walking around. I let them stay there to be safe. - Vergie Curley



Developing Trust with Vergie Curley

When Fourth World Volunteer Corps members first met Vergie in 2019 in Gamerco, New Mexico, they knew they could count on her kind and honest personality. Vergie has been a part of numerous projects since then, showing her trust through gestures of affection in moments of celebration, such as sharing both homemade fry bread and personal concerns. Story Garden facilitators will very often knock on her door to ask her for the chairs she stores, or simply to share the latest news about her family or other ATD Fourth World projects.

Developing trust requires resources for adequate time and spaces.
Donate to ATD Fourth World and develop trust with us.



Your tax-deductible donation of any amount will contribute to:

- **Transportation to meetings**
- **Recording and transcribing equipment**
- **Story Garden supplies**
- **Renovation of the Flea Market Story Garden trailer**

Please use the enclosed envelope or go to <https://atdfourthworld-usa.org/donate>.

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THANK YOU!