

Dear Friends:

This is a special, targeted e-mail appeal to ask your support for an up-coming international seminar on art and creativity, to be held in southern Virginia.

From April 18-25, 2009, some forty participants from different countries and social backgrounds will gather in the Appalachian region of Dickenson County, VA. Fourth World Movement members and friends there have invited musicians, painters, writers, artisans and craftspeople to come share their passions and skills--and their conviction that creative expression is a vital resource in striving together to end poverty.

Jason French is a Fourth World Volunteer in our Appalachian team. He's also an accomplished musician who has learned Bluegrass and other musical traditions from his Dickenson County neighbors. Jason writes:

For me, the April seminar around Art and Creativity is extremely important for the Fourth World Movement as a whole. In my nearly five years here in Dickenson County, I have seen how art and creativity--the music, the crafts and artisanship--are important on so many levels. It all brings together people from different backgrounds despite their differences. It shows the pride and strength of the community. It provides joy and solace to individuals no matter what their background or situation is. I don't think that I can sum it up better than something that my good friend WC Phillips said to me when I asked him about it. He said, "It is important because, no matter how little you have, creativity is something that can't be taken away from you."

In my mind there is no doubt that Art and Creativity are essential tools in the fight against persistent poverty and that this area has much to teach us about this. The "Together to Create to be Free" Seminar will be a perfect opportunity to explore this. It will bring together local, national and international members and friends--painters, musicians, writers, artisans--for a week of exchange through both creative and intellectual means.

Tragically, Jason and his family just recently experienced a fire that burned their house to the ground. They got out safely, but lost all their official papers and possessions--except the children's most-prized stuffed toys and Jason's banjo and locally handmade fiddle. Neighbors, friends, and classmates in the area have rallied to their support, taking them in on the night of the fire and offering clothes, toys, and other donations (even a 7-year-old's piggy bank savings!). We are extremely grateful for their support and for the messages of encouragement from other FWM members around the country.

Equally important, despite this loss, the area members and friends have pledged to continue mobilizing, organizing, and raising funds to make this *Together to Create to be Free* Seminar a success. We are continually amazed by the resilience, creativity, and generosity of the people of Appalachia.

Won't you answer their invitation, and support the efforts of Jason, WC, and other musicians and artisans in Dickenson County? Please feel free to circulate this message. We count on your input and financial support.

With gratitude,

Jill Cunningham, Director