

Narrative of Various Programs and Activities
March 2007 to April 2008

New, Inc. Fourth World Movement was incorporated in New York on March 9, 1971. It is the United States branch of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, an international non-governmental organization which aims to eradicate persistent poverty and exclusion through partnership among families in poverty and other members of society. Members from different social backgrounds act together from the basic principles of:



- the inalienable dignity of each human being,
- the necessity to learn from families living in persistent poverty
- the responsibility of all people to unite to overcome the injustices of poverty.

The Fourth World Movement puts a **priority on those families who are the most disconnected and isolated** because of persistent poverty, those often not reached by other programs (www.4thworldmovement.org). Projects start from families' aspirations, especially on the hopes parents have for their children. They emphasize education, discovery, and skills-sharing and literacy projects such as street libraries, home reading visits, creative workshops, and cultural outings.

Such grassroots projects work toward the **sharing of knowledge** among people of different backgrounds in an **atmosphere of mutual respect and dignity**. They lead to seeking out and creating **forums where** the voice and experience of **those in poverty can influence public opinion and policy**. Local Fourth World Gatherings encourage and train adults to speak in public and to participate in the life of their communities. **National and international encounters** allow families in poverty to realize they are not alone, and to raise a collective voice calling for partnership against poverty. (Internationally, the organization has consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, UNICEF, UNESCO, the ILO, and the Council of Europe.)

The Fourth World Movement also puts a great emphasis on **studying and understanding** the long-term effects of persistent poverty. This work occurs most often **with those in poverty themselves** and serves as the **basis for evaluating** programs and for **representing and advocating** for those mired in persistent poverty. Internationally and nationally, the Fourth World Movement has published many studies, families' histories, and essays on persistent poverty.

A **corps of full-time, long-term volunteers spearheads** this partnership work but relies on the time and commitment of members from all walks of life. Fourth World Volunteer Corps members are men and women of different nationalities, beliefs, ages, and backgrounds. They all agree to receive the same minimum living stipend, regardless of their training, type of responsibility, or length of service. This agreement is part of their commitment to be aligned with families in deep poverty, an assurance for the integrity and continuation of programs according to the organization's basic principles. **Supporters, or "allies,"** volunteer their time and expertise in Fourth World Movement programs, and **use their influence** in society to promote the organization's goals. **Parent activists use their experience of poverty** to reflect with and guide volunteers, take action in their own community, and to speak out on behalf of others in poverty.

The International Movement ATD Fourth World was founded in 1957 by Joseph Wresinski, who was sent to work as a chaplain to 250 families living in an emergency housing camp near Paris, France (www.atd-fourthworld.org). The misery and squalor he found there reminded him of the poverty he had endured as a child. With the families in the camp, he initiated a community

development project that evolved into the International Movement ATD Fourth World. Since its founding, the organization has spread internationally and first came to the United States in 1964 during this country's War on Poverty.

Currently there are Fourth World Movement teams in the US in **New Orleans**, Louisiana; the Appalachian mountain area of **southern Virginia**; **New York City**, New York; and the **Washington D.C. area**. We place our programs and actions into two, interdependent categories: ***Activities with Families and Children*** and ***Training and Public Information***. As described above, activities with low-income families and other members of society lead to public information events and publications. Similarly, our mission is that families who live in persistent poverty be the motors of change, thus they are vital actors in many of our public information events (such as commemorations on October 17 or seminars or promotions of specific publications).

ACTIVITIES WITH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN include:

- **Street Libraries** (New York) and **home reading visits** (New Orleans traveling project) to promote and strengthen a love books and discovery;
- **Tapori Children's Network** presentations and group facilitations to connect children from different backgrounds around their innate sense of fairness and friendship;
- **After School Programs** and volunteering (Dickenson County, VA) to support local initiatives to supplement school efforts;
- **Discussion-forum gatherings**, organizing and attending public events, networking meetings, skills-sharing workshops and classes, celebratory/holiday gatherings, cultural outings and family vacation weekends--all with those in poverty at the center among a diversity of others, to build peace by striving together to end poverty;
- **Evaluation and Planning** opportunities through interviews, surveys, informal chats, virtual/email exchanges, and formal gatherings to ensure those in poverty are active in shaping, implanting, and evaluating programs (a concerted, organization-wide evaluation/planning process took place from November 2007 – June 2008);
- **Accompaniment and support in accessing basic rights** to ensure that vulnerable families stay connected to, and help shape supportive social networks and services.

TRAINING AND PUBLIC INFORMATION actions include:

- **Active recruitment** efforts, **flexible internship** opportunities, and a variety of local, national, and international gatherings for on-going promotion and development of the Fourth World Volunteer Corps;
- **Field placements** for students in the social sector, as well as **information sessions** to service-learning volunteer groups;
- **Public presentations and events**—such as panels, conferences, and commemorations of October 17, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty--in which those in poverty exchange with others their knowledge, experience, and efforts in struggling to overcome poverty;
- **Study-trips, thematic training sessions**, and accompanying **correspondence** and communication with a national network of part-time volunteers;
- **Publications** such as books, reports, and newsletters (*The Fourth World Journal* and *Tapori*), bulletins, and other communication material such as videos and CD-Roms;
- **Our website** www.4thworldmovement.org with on-going updates, input, and links from

members.

The following pages describe our programs and their objectives in depth. Some highlights of the 07-08 year follow at the end of this narrative. Details of highlights can also be found on our website where we post *The Fourth World Journal*, as well as our periodic *Letter to Members and Friends*. www.4thworldmovement.org

Basic US Programs:

ACTIVITIES WITH FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

STREET LIBRARIES, engage children and parents around books, computers, and art in neglected, under-resourced communities. As the Fourth World Movement's signature project, Street Libraries currently occur in New York City and had been active in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina. The New York City Street Library takes place in the Ocean Hill/Brownsville neighborhood in Brooklyn. Street Libraries developed from the principle of reaching towards a community's aspirations and the aim of sharing knowledge in the heart of the community. The format is simple: colorful blankets on the ground, a communal time of reading and stories, followed by an activity promoting discovery, highlighting skills, and encouraging creative expression.

Behind the simplicity, however, are rigorous methods. Street Library volunteers arrive at the same time every week, week after week. They invite all children, but keep a special eye out for those with the most difficulties. They solicit and rely on input and support from parents and other community members. They prepare achievable activities with quality materials. They write observations from their interactions in the community in order to process and learn from them, in turn sharing insights and questions with parents.

The simple actions of Street Library program build a consistent, long-term, and trusted presence in low-income communities and with families struggling with persistent poverty. This relationship leads to further projects and partnerships (such as those described below) that promote positive changes at different levels of society for families and communities in poverty.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN APPALACHIA at the Trammel Community Center and Centennial Heights housing development. In response to the expressed desires of the community, the team in Appalachia conducts after school activities once a week at each location. The format is similar to the Street Library program, inviting all children to participate in reading, games, craft projects, Taporí Children's Network campaigns (see below), and other activities. As with the Street Library program, the adults in the communities are active in planning and carrying out activities with the children, and we continue to work to involve those who are most excluded.

FOURTH WORLD GATHERINGS are forums for adults of different social backgrounds to share their knowledge and skills in the fight to overcome poverty. In New York and New Orleans members and friends have built a tradition of gathering in mutual respect and dignity. They share their struggles, as well as successful efforts in areas of education, housing, family cohesion, employment, etc. Such meetings incorporate creative means of facilitation (interviews, hands-on artistic workshops, role-plays, small-group interaction) to allow for people with different learning styles to express themselves. For those who have experienced poverty and exclusion, Fourth World Gatherings are an arena to gain confidence in their ability to teach others, as well as get practice in public speaking and representation. Those from more secure backgrounds start to experience how such encounters can lead to changes on the personal, professional, and institutional levels.

The APPALACHIAN LEARNING COOPERATIVE marked its first year of operation in Dickenson County, Virginia. Local partnerships developed over a 12-year presence by our Volunteer Corps members

led to the communal, mostly-volunteer effort in building this place for the **free exchange of knowledge, skills, and culture**. It officially opened its doors to the public in September 2006. Currently, local residents lead and benefit from computer courses, language classes, music workshops, quilting circles, and stress relief exercises. The Learning Co-op also serves as a place for student and church groups to volunteer their manual work skills and learn about anti-poverty efforts and community development initiatives in the area. Members and friends come together at the Learning Co-op for formal and informational Fourth World Movement meetings as well. (see Sept. 2007 *Fourth World Journal* article: <http://www.4thworldmovement.org/pubjournals.php> p.4).

The EVALUATION AND PLANNING PROCESS 2007-08 involved members from different backgrounds in taking stock of current actions and participation, exchanging questions and issues with peers internationally, assessing priorities and formulating project plans for the next four years. From November 2007 through to the Annual Meeting of June 2008, members engaged in interviews, surveys, virtual exchanges by e-mail, and formal gatherings to complete this Evaluation and Planning process. By the end of the fiscal year, March 31, 2008, a draft of a *Letter to Members and Friends* was in progress and was scheduled to go out in April 2008. (see: <http://www.4thworldmovement.org/presentations.php>) It was to state the five priorities and some specific plans and projects drawn from this process. Additionally, three delegates from the United States were slated to attend an international planning session in May 2008 at the Fourth World Movement's international center in France.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND EVENTS create more formal opportunities for the voice and experience of those in poverty to influence public opinion and policy. Fourth World Movement members prepare and train one another through interviews, research, and Fourth World Gatherings to organize and speak at poverty-related panel discussions, conferences, seminars, and rallies, on local, state, national, and international levels. (See also "Training and Public Information" section)

CULTURAL OUTINGS provide a chance for discovery and experiential learning outside one's neighborhood, for both children and adults. Outings with Fourth World Movement are another non-threatening way for members from different social backgrounds to come together, share a common experience, and build trust. The outings can help reinforce themes from Street Library activities, or simply offer a day of fun and quality time as a family or group. In New York and New Orleans members gather for outings to museums, parks, musical or literary events, recreational centers, etc.

FAMILY VACATION WEEKENDS to the countryside allow struggling families in New York to get a break from the daily grind of the city, nurture their relationships in a calm and supportive atmosphere with others, and regain some much-needed strength for tackling the obstacles of living in poverty. Like cultural outings, vacation weekends are also a time of discovery (nature walks, historical farm life, swimming, fishing, etc.) and meeting new people, all part of breaking the isolation so often caused by poverty.

HOLIDAY PARTIES AND FESTIVE OCCASIONS provide opportunities to simply celebrate our common humanity. They are times to highlight talents, manifest friendship, experience a sense of community, and as one member put it, "live peace together." Such moments are important touchstones--as much for those from non-poor backgrounds as for those who know poverty and exclusion.

TAPORI PRESENTATIONS AND GROUP FACILITATION at schools, community centers, and homeless shelters link children from different backgrounds and cultures around the motto, "We want all children to have the same chances." Through the Taporí Children's Network, 7- to 13-year-olds learn from and about one another through a newsletter and website relating true stories of children's acts and expressions of friendship, empathy, and fairness. Hands-on activities invite children to create and add their own ideas, actions, and projects for a world without poverty (www.tapori.org). Taporí groups and presentations occur through our partnerships with local organizations in New York, the Washington, DC area, Appalachia, New Orleans, and on the road as the New Orleans Volunteers travel. Schools and

individual group leaders use Tapori resources to lead activities throughout the US.

ACCOMPANIMENT AND SUPPORT IN ACCESSING BASIC RIGHTS in housing, education, family unity, and legal issues expose obstacles and reveal injustices families in poverty must face in times of crisis. Trust and partnership develop through Street Libraries, Fourth World Gatherings, and other activities, but crises for families in poverty still occur. When such families have no other networks available, full-time Fourth World Volunteer Corps members, part-time volunteers (“supporters”), and other families who’ve experienced hardship make time to lend such support as **accompanying a family to housing court to prevent eviction, attending a school meeting with a timid or frustrated parent, advocating in a child welfare case, linking isolated families to local services and community support, visiting a family member in prison, or supporting a family to bury a loved one, in dignity.**

There is reciprocity in such support among Fourth World Movement members. Facing obstacles and struggles together provides the knowledge and strength to formulate a message and plan of action at an organizational level, geared to change public attitudes and policy. This type of support occurs in all Fourth World Movement locations with **special attention to that reciprocity**, so that individual crises serve to strengthen a wider struggle.

COMPUTER CLASSES IN COMMUNITY CENTERS IN SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA respond to local residents’ aspirations for skills-sharing opportunities. They strengthen the capacity and connectedness among people in an isolated, often-exploited region. They provide a means for our Volunteer Corps members to create links among people of different backgrounds dispersed throughout this rural area. Such links lead to other both formal and informal projects and initiatives.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ANTI-POVERTY ORGANIZATIONS AND EFFORTS serves to build and strengthen commitment and actions against poverty in this country. It also opens up channels for families in poverty to link into crucial community resources and services. Partnerships with others occur in all Fourth World Movement locations. They include volunteering in public schools, as well as links with community-based organizations, faith-based programs, and policy-centered organizations on a variety of poverty-related issues.

Most notably in **southwestern Virginia**, Fourth World Movement Volunteer Corps members have continually supported local community development efforts through **participation in community center programs, health fairs and clinics, housing repair groups, and the area Head Start program.** In an isolated region often viewed only as receiving help, we purposely did not create our “own” project, but instead put our energies into learning from and highlighting Appalachian knowledge and efforts.

NEW ORLEANS “CONNECTED AND VISIBLE” TRAVEL PROJECT

After Hurricane Katrina, our New Orleans team and other members returned to the Crescent City in October, 2005. For months they regularly **attended community meetings**, supported one another in navigating emergency systems, and **joined efforts with other small community activist organizations** to help in clean-up and rebuilding efforts. As others members have since then made and continue to make their way back to New Orleans, Fourth World Movement members offer support in their continually difficult search for affordable housing, adequate schools, professional health services, and other basic necessities. Together they make efforts to participate in community meetings to voice their concerns about rebuilding and development efforts.

Nearly 3 years since Katrina, many of our members are still unable to return home. Thus, **Volunteer Corps members continue to take to the road to maintain connections** with families in poverty still displaced after Katrina. The visits through the “Connected and Visible” Travel Project include time with books, Tapori activities, and exchanging news and messages from family and friends that are still separated. Such visits help to fight isolation and maintain families’ strength and community ties. To further strengthen connections, the New Orleans team sends to members and friends **the *Nawlins-Lagniappe*, a newsletter** which collects the photos and news from the visits on the road and developing action in the city.

This **Connected and Visible Travel Project** has another component, that of **meeting new individuals and organizations working against poverty**. This helps build and strengthen a network of anti-poverty activists in the Gulf Coast region and revive, with their voices and experience, the national dialogue on ending persistent poverty. Through the visits and networking of the Connected and Visible Travel Project, New Orleans members mobilized themselves and other FWM delegates to take part in the **United States Social Forum** in Atlanta, GA .

Still-displaced members also took an active role in the **international evaluation and planning process** we undertook as an organization. Through that process, **FWM members have devised plans to write a book** on their experiences and connections that help sustain them before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina.

Those **members who are back and living in New Orleans** expressed the importance of “getting back to the streets.” They analyzed the essential elements of the former Street Library, considered the changed context of the city and people’s lives, and **have planned a new project with young parents** and their infant and toddler children.

TRAINING AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

ON-GOING TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FOURTH WORLD VOLUNTEER CORPS MEMBERS occur through local, national, and international meetings and correspondence with colleagues. Such staff development meetings address various themes relevant to Volunteer Corps members’ roles: learning from our projects and interactions with families in poverty; learning from current events and anti-poverty trends in the country; understanding the collective history and culture of our organization, and discussing issues inherent to our specific commitment (simple living stipend, necessary availability, staying long term, living communally, etc.). Volunteer Corps members also take advantage of training opportunities or courses offered by other organizations, colleges, and professionals.

OUR FORMALIZED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM is an intense introduction to the Fourth World Movement’s history and approach, and to a long-term commitment in the Volunteer Corps. Interns live and work, unpaid, alongside Volunteer Corps members for 3 months, taking part in activities with families and children, reading and discussing publications, and helping with the upkeep and improvement of Fourth World Movement centers. At the end of the 3 months, interns make a mutual decision with Volunteer Corps members about their continued involvement: join the Volunteer Corps (thus, the payroll) or remain in link as a supporter. Outreach and recruitment for the internship occurs through listings in college careers offices, publications, and online sites for volunteer opportunities. Attendance at careers fairs is an active part of recruiting, as well as a venue for public information.

UNIVERSITIES USE FOURTH WORLD MOVEMENT TEAMS AS FIELD PLACEMENT SITES to train students whose line of work will have them interacting with people in poverty. For the sixth consecutive year, the New York City team has received students from Columbia’s School of Social Work for 9-month, 35-hour/week training placement. Princeton Theological Seminary has placed summer interns with us in the past and is open to do so in the future; we have had discussions with Harvard’s Center for Public Interest Careers (CPIC) to make it feasible for CPIC interns and fellows to join our teams and that may occur in 2008.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON FOURTH WORLD MOVEMENT MEMBERS to inform volunteer groups involved in their programs. Specifically, in southwestern Virginia there are numerous housing repair initiatives. Church groups, college students, and others come to the Appalachian region to help repair homes. Discussion on poverty issues is part of the program. Local coordinators there call upon Fourth World Movement Volunteers to present our approach and share our knowledge.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND EVENTS create more formal opportunities for the voice and experience of those in poverty to influence public opinion and policy. Fourth World Movement members prepare

and train one another through interviews, research, and Fourth World Gatherings to organize and speak at poverty-related panel discussions, conferences, seminars, and rallies, on local, state, national, and international levels.

In New York City, members take on a special responsibility to reinforce our dialogue with the United Nations. One Volunteer Corps member, based in the New York team, assures the International Movement's representation as a non-governmental organization with consultative status at the United Nations. Other New York members support that representation by following certain UN committees. They sometimes speak on behalf of Fourth World members from other countries, and welcome and exchange with those able to come from other countries to UN events.

The PUBLIC COMMEMORATION OF OCTOBER 17, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is primary among such events. On October 17, 1987, some 100,000 citizens from around the world gathered in Paris on the Plaza of Human Rights. They affirmed Fourth World Movement founder Joseph Wresinski's (1917-1988) declaration: "*Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure these rights be respected in our solemn duty.*" Since then, poor and non-poor around the globe have continued to mark the day as a reaffirmation of their common commitment to end poverty. (www.oct17.org)

Fourth World Movement members in New York, Washington, DC, southwestern Virginia, and New Orleans organize commemorations which revolve around testimonies from people in poverty, and include children's presentations, inspirational songs, marches, communal meals, conferences, and other actions that bring together people of diverse backgrounds to stand together against poverty.

In link with our International Center, the US National Center in the Washington, DC area provides mobilization and informational material and support to individuals and organizations around the country who also choose to mark this Day.

MAINTAINING LINKS WITH NATIONAL NETWORK OF SUPPORTERS furthers the scope of our public information and training. Through e-mail and mail correspondence, targeted news bulletins, and opportunities to gather for study trips and thematic training sessions, the National Center (Landover, MD) and its Washington, DC office facilitate the involvement of people throughout the country who are not directly linked to Fourth World Movement teams.

THE FOURTH WORLD JOURNAL, OUR NATIONAL NEWSLETTER carries the Fourth World Movement's public message to a circulation of 10,000 people. Articles highlight Fourth World Movement programs and events, deliver testimonies by people in poverty, and address from our unique approach issues relevant to the struggle to end poverty. Since April 2007, *The Fourth World Journal* comes out in full color, allowing for more lay-out and messaging options, as well as reducing the number of color printed leaflets we've opted for in the past. Plans are to create an e-newsletter.

TAPORI, THE TAPORI CHILDREN'S NETWORK NEWSLETTER, along with the WEBSITE www.tapori.org, help children from different backgrounds learn from one another and express and act on their sense of justice, friendship, and empathy. The bi-monthly newsletter for ages seven to thirteen provides true stories of children in poverty and those who stand beside them. Each issue proposes an activity to solicit children's ideas and tap into their creativity. The website incorporates colorfully illustrated stories, children's messages, and updates on campaigns and events. **Individuals or groups who send material to the Tapori Network receive personalized responses** and see their contributions mentioned in subsequent newsletters and on the website. *Tapori* currently reaches a **circulation of some 1700 addresses in the US** (including schools, community groups, and individual homes) and another 200 in other countries.

The WEBSITE www.4thworldmovement.org carries our public message in seconds to the wider, internet-connected public and provides an immediate forum for members to promote and publicize the highlights of actions and events. It provides quick access to our internship process for young people to further their social justice action. It allows people to order quickly our publications and resources, as

well, of course, to support our work financially. We re-vamped our website in 2007 through the coordination of one young staffer working with the donated professional services of two qualified graphic and web designers. Plans are to continue this re-vamping and updating to make the site more user-friendly for teams and members, with photo galleries of actions, sound bites and video, blogs, and links to members' actions outside of Fourth World Movement. Goals for our website are to transform its creation and upkeep into an "Activity with Families and Children."

ASSORTED PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCE DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MEDIA about specific Fourth World Movement projects or poverty-related issues provide tools both for internal and public training and information. They are a channel through which the knowledge and experience of people in poverty and those who strive together in partnership to end poverty, can influence public opinion and policy. As stated above, members with an experience of poverty are vital partners in creating, as well as promoting reports, publications, and other informational material. Public presentations by people in poverty themselves of such material, serve to confirm those members as agents of change involved from development of projects through to the evaluation and dissemination of them.

In 2007 we promoted and gave back to members who had participated in making the remarkable international **photo and quotation compilation *Smiles Worldwide***. We spent energy this year on shoring up the **CD-Rom resource in our *Unleashing Hidden Potential*** work, gaining donated services of a computer programmer to repair glitches. One long-term staffer began exchanges with members on the **messages of founder Joseph Wresinski collected in *A Compass for Tomorrow***. This exchange will culminate in a multi-voiced publication sometime in the near future. Additionally, the July/August 2007 issue of the **PRRAC newsletter** (Poverty and Race Research Action Council) published a response article by Fourth World Volunteer Jill Cunningham to the Center on America's Progress report on ending poverty http://www.prrac.org/display_newsletter.php.

2007 -2008 HIGHLIGHTS

For a full recounting of highlights from 2007, we encourage readers to access our website and the online issues of *The Fourth World Journal*, particularly April 2007 and September 2007. Those articles will give news about:

- A **new playground** and partnership activities for children in Trammel, VA
- The one-year anniversary of the **Appalachian Learning Co-op** and their on-going "**Quilt of our Lives**" project
- Efforts nation-wide to dialogue and collect signatures on our international Call to Action: *Ending Extreme Poverty, A Road to Peace* (www.oct17.org)
- Continuing participation by children in the Taporí Silhouette Campaign
- Storytellers, plays, and partnership during Summer Street Library activities in New York
- A diverse national delegation of members, led by our returned and still-displaced members from New Orleans, attending the 15,000 strong **US Social Forum** in Atlanta, GA.

And below, we annex the text (unformatted) of our April 08 *Letter to Members and Friends* since it speaks of the Evaluation and Planning process undertaken in the latter part of the 07-08 Fiscal Year, and it gives a glimpse of our highlights to come:



April 24, 2008

Dear Members and Friends:

This year's Fourth World Movement **Annual Meeting** will take place on **Saturday**,

June 28, 2008 at the **National Center** in **Landover, MD**.

Last year's "Four gatherings, one Annual Meeting" was an exciting and dynamic event for members in their local areas. It created an important momentum for a diverse and unified national delegation to represent us at the US Social Forum in Atlanta, GA. The exchange of photos and doing the day's business via internet conference (skype) helped establish links to one another across the distances. Members have expressed, however, the **enrichment of face-to-face encounters**. Of course! Such encounters help us all sustain and deepen our commitment to see an end to poverty. Our movement is built on them!

To combine the benefits of both methods, this year we urge members and friends to gather *locally* to prepare for the June 28 Annual Meeting. In New York City, the DC area, southern Virginia, and New Orleans, we hope you can **start planning** your preparation meetings for **middle or end of May**. Be ready to send photos and messages to other teams, exchange by phone or internet, and to welcome other members from afar. For those of you not geographically close to a team, we're happy at the National Center to coordinate links with you, or help you host a gathering for members in your area.

2007 Highlights

As always, the Annual Meeting is a great time to celebrate the achievements of the past year. We celebrated our 50th anniversary internationally in 2007. We'll take the Annual Meeting and preparation as times to share such highlights as:

--the partnerships formed and other benefits from our **participation at the US Social Forum**,

--the impact of 157,000 signatures, from nearly 160 countries, collected from encounters during the campaign **Call to Action: Ending Extreme Poverty, A Road to Peace** (more than 3000 signatures from the US!),

--the energy, commitments, and the "magic moments" that occurred during **commemorations on October 17**,

--the exchanges that children did through **Tapori**, as well as, the creativity, hope, and thirst for learning they expressed in the activities of **Street Library, after school groups, and visits** to still-displaced families, and

--the increase of our **public reach** through such tools as our newly-designed **website** (www.4thworldmovement.org), a now-color *Fourth World Journal*, and several recent publications that provide qualitative research, promote dialogue, and invite exchanges about the work of founder Fr. Joseph Wresinski.

2008: International Evaluation and Planning with Members

As you receive this letter, an international Evaluation and Planning session is taking place at our international center in Mery sur Oise, France (near Paris). For the past several weeks, members have been exchanging in different ways, to take stock of strengths and weakness, raise important issues, and start to clarify priorities. Some of you have been involved in interviews, gatherings, and "virtual exchanges" with other teams and groups worldwide. (Thanks to all of you who did translations!)

At the international gathering, from April 28 – May 4, **delegates will be pooling their local experience of this evaluation work** to help shape the direction of the International Movement for the next four years. If all goes well, **three delegates** from the US--**Obie Donald** from New York, **Jeannette Bashful** from New Orleans, and **myself** from the National Center—will be with some 80 other members from different backgrounds and countries. Obie and Jeannette both know the Fourth World Movement through the Street Library--Obie from his own participation a few years ago, and Jeannette from several years of supporting her children and others to participate. I have had the privilege to learn from them both, in the Street Library setting and in other Fourth World gatherings.

We will give feedback from this collective international work at the local preparation gatherings in May and at the Annual Meeting on June 28. We will count on your reactions and continued input to help refine the US planning. The goal is to create together a cohesive plan from the local level through to the international. At the world level, the final planning will be announced publicly on October 17, 2008. Our goal in the US is to finalize our planning by the end of the summer.

National Priorities

From collective work done by members in the US thus far, these broad priorities emerge:

--Presence among families struggling in poverty, outreach to those most disconnected, and actions inspired by aspirations families have for their children. This country still mobilizes around children. Families who may shun other “programs” still welcome our presence with books, art, music, and computers because of our principle of sharing knowledge and addressing aspirations in a spirit of mutual respect. In **New York**, Street Library supporters from within and outside the neighborhood are deepening their partnership to improve the community for and with children. In **Appalachia**, our friends are sharing their time, skills, and resources to provide enriching after school activities for children in a struggling school. In **New Orleans**, many families have managed to return, but even less exists for their children than before Katrina. They are coming together with other members to create a new project with young people and young families. Across the country and internationally, **Tapori** remains a channel through which children of all backgrounds can develop their sense of fairness and empathy, and create friendship and peace.

--Recruitment for the Fourth World Volunteer Corps: Families struggling daily against poverty deserve others who make a full-time, long-term commitment to learn from and stand with them. We count on all our members to help develop active recruitment methods and tools: speaking as diverse members to student groups around the country; creating audio-visuals about the Volunteer Corps, seeking funding for Volunteers’ commitment, etc.

--Encounters, Trainings, and Public Events: We must create more times together as members to learn from, confront, and support one another. It helps each of us grow in our involvement and knowledge. We must plan study-trips to different teams and training sessions on actions and issues. But we must also take more opportunities as members to “walk our walk:” by visiting other organizations together, speaking out at conferences, and strengthening links with other partners and networks. And we must think about **Fundraising Events** that combine the talents and passions of local members and reach out to new people.

One important event planned is the **Joseph Wresinski International Colloquium** which will take place December 2008, in France. There are invitations to academics, researchers, and people from different walks of life to attend. Let’s use this event to pull together our desire and energy in the US to discover more about the life and work of Joseph Wresinski, exchange among ourselves, and share our discoveries with the wider public. We can use resources like *Taking a Country at Its Word* which chronicles Wresinski’s interaction with the ideals of the US in the development of the FWM here. There is also a new professional film about Fr. Joseph’s work. And there is on-going translation, review, and dialogue around the publication-in-process: *A Compass for Tomorrow*. We are planning gatherings and “mini-seminars” in a lead-up to and past the Wresinski Colloquium.

--Vibrant, multi-voiced, unified Public Message Tools: In our encounters and public events, we always promote the participation of people with a direct experience of poverty. This input must extend to the publishing of books and articles, but also of other

media like our **website, blogs, digital videos**, etc. I propose **one-minute, member videos** that explain from different perspectives who and what we are together. You may have other ideas! Such tools will help us recruit, fundraise, raise our public profile, and strengthen our message and actions for a partnership to overcome poverty.

Choosing Membership

You will receive in a few weeks more details about the June 28th Annual Meeting. For now, please review the **Membership Invitation and Renewal** form. We hope you will choose or re-choose your membership and send it back by mid-May. Membership is free, but we obviously appreciate any donation you can afford. Thank you for your involvement and support.

Sincerely,

Jill Cunningham, Director, Fourth World Movement

