



Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated.

To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.

October 17, 1987, Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988), Founder, International Movement ATD Fourth World

Fourth World Movement/USA * 7600 Willow Hill Drive * Landover, MD 20785-4658 * 301-336-9489 * Vol.35 No.2 * July 2003

Cultivating Respect

By Colette Jay

When Ruth Smith says, "I wish all the world could be like the Fourth World Movement," (see p. 3) she doesn't mean she wants everyone to run Street Libraries. What she wishes is that the respect and dignity that she and others find in and bring to the Fourth World Movement, could be found everywhere.

No matter how good the policies and laws are that our governments enact, it is the basic respect with which we treat each other that needs cultivating. Our society must be based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and value of each human being.

This is not easy, especially in regards to people living in persistent poverty. Their value and potential go unrecognized by most of society. Their lives are so difficult, their problems so intertwined that it is relatively easy to dismiss them as hopeless or even complacent. A long-term commitment is necessary in order to understand the complexity of these people's lives and the efforts they are making to help themselves and others. This understanding is crucial to developing policies that address the reality of persistent poverty and build on the efforts of the poorest, themselves. It is also crucial to cultivating an atmosphere of respect in our society.

The long-term commitment of the Fourth World Volunteer Corps is evident in these pages. For almost forty years, Volunteer Corps members in New York have worked to create the conditions where we can learn from the poorest and they can unleash their hidden potential. Preschools, Street Libraries, Fourth World Gatherings, ... all of our programs have been developed in partnership with those living in persistent poverty and are grounded in mutual respect. From the beginning, Volunteer Corps members also reached out to people from other backgrounds to build a national and international network of citizens committed to ending persistent poverty and social exclusion.

We are still building this network and will continue to do so until Ms. Smith and everyone else can walk into any office, school or store and be treated with the respect they deserve, until the whole world is like the Fourth World Movement.

Thirty-nine Years of History and Counting

The Fourth World Movement in New York Looks Back... and Forward!

By Angela Evosevic

We are pleased to announce that the Fourth World House in New York has closed for a much needed and much anticipated \$1.3 million renovation and expansion. We would like to take this opportunity to walk you through the history and evolution of the Fourth World Movement in New York and offer insight on what the Fourth World House has meant for the entire Fourth World Movement.

In 1964, Fourth World Volunteer Bernadette Cornuau came to New York's Lower East Side at the invitation of Lloyd Ohlin, the distinguished criminologist and founder of Mobilization for Youth (MFY), an early program in the War on Poverty. While on sabbatical in Europe, Ohlin had participated in a Fourth World seminar and was impressed with Joseph Wresinski and the work of Fourth World Volunteers. Inspired by a nation that mobilized its people and its resources to wage a war on poverty, Wresinski took advantage of the opportunity to be involved in this ambitious social project. As part of her work for MFY, Cornuau reorganized neighborhood groups relating to schools. She was succeeded by Mary Rabagliati who helped MFY evaluate their program.

In 1966, as the MFY program was winding down, Wresinski felt it was time to create a Fourth World branch in the United States, the first one outside Europe. The US branch was called NEW/Movement for a New Community—NEW for short—and was changed to the Fourth World Movement in 1981. The association's first meeting took place in the fall of 1966. Fourth World Volunteer Huguette Redegeld was responsible for developing our first project while working at an outside job to support herself and the fledgling organization.

In 1968, Redegeld launched Art and Poetry, an after-school program located in two adjoining basements of tenement buildings. One basement was dedicated to arts and crafts and the other to books and reading. Fanchette Clement-Fanelli, Moya Amateau and Maria Rosa Ballester came to New York to relieve Redegeld and to take over the after-school program. In response to the number of pre-schooled aged children accompanying their sisters and brothers to the after-school program, and to the teenagers' persistent requests for activities, the team



The first Fourth World Volunteers started an after-school program, a youth club and a preschool in two adjoining tenement basements on Fourth Street.

I remember when two young women from 4th Street...were looking for kids between 3 and 5 years old from our street. It was in 1972 and 1973. I had just come from Puerto Rico. It was a neighborhood where not many people had jobs and there were drugs around. The young children in the neighborhood would just stay at home or play in the street. Fanchette and Maria Rosa would bring the kids to a preschool called 'El Cielito,' and for the kids it was like 'El Cielito' (a little heaven) here on earth.

Maria Rosado

started a pre-school program and a club for teenagers. In 1972, Vincent Fanelli offered science classes to the neighborhood teenagers. He also took the teenagers on camping trips and supported their efforts to find employment. The Fanellis remained



By the mid-1970s, the Lower East Side had greatly deteriorated and many families were moving to other parts of New York.

with the New York team until the late 1980s when they opened the Fourth World National Center outside of Washington, DC. Today they are working in Appalachia.

In spite of the War on Poverty and numerous anti-poverty initiatives, the Lower East Side rapidly deteriorated during the 1970s. The Fourth World Movement was not immune to the devastation and, in 1972, the programs had to be

relocated because of a fire that spread from the adjacent tenement. By 1974, the programs had been burnt out again. The East 4th Street block, where the programs were located and where the volunteers lived, was half empty as a result of fires and landlords abandoning their buildings.

After 10 years of living and working in one of the poorest New York City neighborhoods, the volunteers had in-depth understanding of urban American poverty, which included the injustices suffered by very poor families as well as their strengths, efforts and aspirations for the future. The War on Poverty petered out in 1968, but poverty relentlessly persisted. Anti-poverty programs on the Lower East Side came and went in a blink of an eye. In this atmosphere, Fourth World's long-term commitment to the poorest families was all the more pertinent and necessary.

In spite of the changing neighborhood landscape, Fourth World Movement programs continued to grow and evolve as did its support base and membership. Whenever possible, the small team of volunteers established links, through correspondence and travel, with

See *Evolution*, p. 2.

Fourth World House Becomes International Crossroads



The Fourth World House on First Avenue was purchased in 1974. It quickly became an international crossroads where people dedicated to ending persistent poverty could meet one another and work together towards their common goal.



Meetings at the Fourth World House are unique – people from all neighborhoods get together to share their experiences and to listen to one another. Each gathering makes me stronger and more ready to talk about our beliefs and hopes.

Marie-Claire Foss

Evolution, from p. 1. individuals and anti-poverty groups throughout the country. The first U.S. issue of the Tapor Children's Network newsletter was published in early 1974, thanks to several supporters in different parts of the country. A national anti-poverty organization began to take root.

During this time, Wresinski was also laying the groundwork for a growing international organization that he was determined would represent the world's poorest families at the

You can't learn how to read, you can't learn anything, if you can't discipline yourself. My dad played a big role. I used to go with him to these night classes at the Fourth World House. He really was trying! I was a young kid. I remember it was important for me that he was trying to do something for himself.

Nixon Pacheco, Jr.

United Nations. Increasingly, his trips to New York to visit the team also included meetings at the UN. In 1974, the international movement obtained Non-Governmental Organization "roster status" at the UN, allowing us to observe certain meetings. Our status was elevated twice, and in 1991 we obtained Consultative Status I, giving us the right to speak during meetings and submit papers and studies.

Until 1974, the small team of volunteers rented several basement and storefront spaces for the youth programs. They lived in small apartments in the neighborhood and were subject to some of the same threats that menaced very poor families, including burglaries and fires. These spaces were also used for administrative work, correspondence with members and other organizations, fundraising and creating newsletters. The team was also increasingly responsible for cultivating a partnership with the UN. The time had come for the Fourth World to find a larger, more permanent space to house a growing organization.

This is why, in 1974, Wresinski and the team of volunteers in New York purchased the four-story Fourth

World House located on First Avenue, in what is now known as the East Village. The volunteers and supporters undertook repair and renovation work on the weekends and in their spare time. The top two floors became housing for volunteers in the team and visitors, with a room set aside for an office for international relations with the UN. The first-floor storefront became an office for planning and evaluating activities, writing newsletters and reports, and doing fundraising. The basement

storefront offered a large meeting area. The educational programs for children and teens continued on East 4th Street, about 10 minutes from the Fourth World House. The Fourth World House first opened its doors to the public during an open house in February 1975.



I started to get involved in the Street Library little by little until I felt good about being involved. It became a family tradition; it became family with my family. It was probably one of the most positive, motivating forces that came into my life at that particular time.

[...]I know it is hard sometimes, but not only do the Fourth World Volunteers get the kids' attention, they keep it. I believe that comes from the volunteers building a personal relationship with the kids. The Street Library creates a very good, positive atmosphere for the kids and parents who become involved.

Emma Speaks

The new Fourth World House was to serve three equally important functions:

- To be an information hub where people could become involved in the fight against poverty by learning, sharing insights and experiences, and contributing to possible solutions.
- To provide a place where Fourth World volunteers could take a step back from their daily work alongside very poor families in order to plan and evaluate their work and to reflect on the long-term commitment they have chosen.
- To provide a forum for people living in extreme poverty to meet together in order to reflect on their experiences, discover their common history and develop the means to advocate for themselves and on behalf of others even poorer.

As stated above, the Lower East Side neighborhood was rapidly changing in the mid-1970s and many families had moved to other parts of the city. As more and more of them

moved away, we pared down our programs in the neighborhood. We kept in touch with several families and, at their request, started what would become the Street Library Program.* Street Libraries have taken place in the South Bronx, Harlem, and several locations in Brooklyn. Today, the Street Library Program is based in the Ocean Hill/Brownsville section of Brooklyn.

Throughout the evolution of the Street Library Program, the house on First Avenue has been a gathering point for members of the Fourth World Movement. In 1976, the first of what has come to be known as Fourth World Gatherings took place there. These gatherings offer poor parents the opportunity to discuss as a group the pertinent issues affecting their lives. They also meet—on equal footing—with people of other backgrounds who are committed to ending poverty. This gives them the opportunity to contribute their intelligence, opinions and experiences to an anti-poverty movement that advocates on their behalf simultaneously at the local, national and international levels. In addition to working to improve their local communities, these adults also make an important contribution to building a better world.

Over the years, meeting themes have included welfare, human rights, children's rights, family, housing, education and poverty in other countries. Fourth World Gatherings are an integral part of our dialogue with officials from the UN, from New York City and State, and from the U.S. government, as well as with faculty from MIT, Harvard, Columbia and other universities or community colleges. In addition to offering a forum where people of different backgrounds can foster a dialogue based on mutual understanding and a common commitment to end poverty, the outcomes of these meetings have been included in various papers, studies and speeches.

Since it first opened, the Fourth World House has bustled with activity, making it an international crossroads in the fight against poverty. Guests have included members of the Fourth World Movement from over twenty

See **Crossroads**, p. 3.

*Street Libraries, which remain our central program in New York, bring books, art activities and computers to disadvantaged communities to engage children and their families in learning.



A Place Where Everyone is Respected as a Human Being



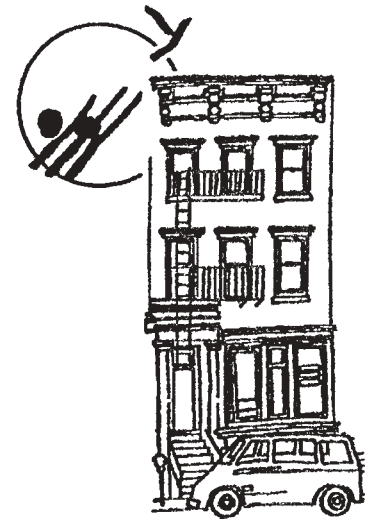
One of the goals of the Fourth World Movement is to make the voice of the poorest heard at local, national and international levels. One important venue is the United Nations, which has its headquarters in New York. The Fourth World House has served as a base for building partnerships with governmental and non-governmental delegates there.



The Fourth World Movement in the USA is wonderful. They have been able to make it possible for people from different parts of the world to meet together in order to fight for a better world for families living in poverty.

[...]The Fourth World House gathers people together without any barriers. To me, it is like an embassy where we truly understand that we are human beings.

Germaine Milazare, Delegate from Mauritius to the Fourth World Family Congress at the UN in 1994.



Fourth World House Capital Campaign

Budget:
\$1.3 million

Amount raised,
as of June 30, 2003:
\$672,800

Leadership gifts from three individuals and the Fondation ATD Quart Monde
100% participation from Board of Directors and staff

Architect:
Paul Castrucci

Contractor:
Ace Drywall

Crossroads, from p. 2. countries on five continents. In addition to the family gatherings, the Fourth World House has been used regularly for holiday parties, conferences, seminars, training sessions, supporters' meetings, reflection groups, exhibits, literacy classes, computer workshops, and

children's activities. Thousands of people from across the globe have passed through the Fourth World House doors and when renovation is completed in 2004 we look forward to welcoming thousands more and working with them in the international movement to end poverty.

In the Fourth World Movement, we don't give food or things. It's more about reaching people's hearts... You don't feel prejudice, you don't feel guilt, you feel everybody is equal. You don't feel different, you don't feel small, you just feel like another human being...I wish all the world could be like the Fourth World Movement.

Ruth Smith



The poor have an experience and a way of thinking. They have a unique knowledge to teach us about humanity, love, justice, and sharing. Those who have learning, security, prestige, must learn again from those who have nothing. Those who have power must put themselves in the state of being inferior, of listening.

If the poorest start to teach us new ways of thinking, our conception of humankind will no longer be the same.

Joseph Wresinski
Founder, Fourth World Movement

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To learn more about the early years of the Fourth World Movement in New York, read *The Human Face of Poverty* by Vincent Fanelli. See order form at right.



A Struggle for Education: One Young Woman's Story

On April 29th, Fourth World Movement members Germaine Russell and Corrinna Bain appeared on NOA-TV's

“Knowing Your Family History,” hosted by Antoinette Harrell-Miller. This show, which focuses on African American history and genealogy, runs four days a week on one of the New Orleans local cable channels. Ms. Harrell-Miller first came to know about the Fourth World Movement last February through Sr. Fara



Germaine Russell (l) and her mother, Gina, look at a photo album during a Street Library.

Impastato, a long-time friend of the Fourth World Movement. Ms. Harrell-Miller read the book *Germaine* by Maryvonne Caillaux and wanted Ms. Russell to appear on her show.

During the interview, when asked about the book, Ms. Russell replied, “The book is based on my life, my struggle for my education. I decided to go back to school at sixteen years old after my grandmom passed away. I had been out of school to take care of her. She was confined to a wheel chair and my mom didn't have the help she needed to take care of her.

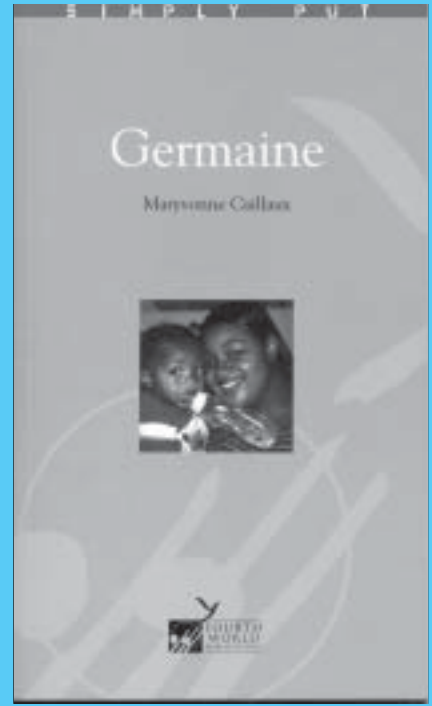
After my grandmom died, it took about four months to go back to school because the [GED] programs didn't want to take me because I was too young. Finally, Sr. Fara helped me get into one.”

Ms. Harrell-Miller also asked about the Fourth World Movement's approach to fighting poverty. Ms. Bain spoke about its history and current programs. She showed photos from last fall's commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of

Poverty and the Street Library's mosaic project (see Vol. 35, No. 1). The banner used to inaugurate the mosaic was also on display in the studio.

When asked by Ms. Harrell-Miller how the Street Library had helped her in life, Ms. Russell said, “[It] has always been there for me. It helped me reading-wise [and] I made new friends all over the world.”

This episode of “Knowing Your Family History” ran for two weeks.



Through homelessness, health problems and neighborhood violence, Germaine and her family never lose hope for the future. To order your copy of this inspiring book, see the bottom of page 3.

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FOURTH WORLD JOURNAL

The Fourth World Journal is a regular publication of the Fourth World Movement/USA, the US branch of an international association working with and on behalf of those around the world who live in extreme poverty.

The International Movement ATD Fourth World is an NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO and the Council of Europe.

The Fourth World Journal aims to bring together different points of view, especially those of the very poor themselves, on topics related to extreme poverty. We encourage our readers to share with us their reactions and comments.

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INSIDE:
The Past, Present and Future of the Fourth World Movement in New York City

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