



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.38 No.4 \* April 2007

## A Call to Action

By Jill Cunningham

We believe extreme poverty exists in all societies and undermines peace. The struggle to end poverty can succeed only with the experience, know-how, and participation of those who live it. This calls for people from all backgrounds to combine strengths. This multi-voiced partnership leads to innovative, improved, and sustainable anti-poverty programs.

In these pages, we launch "A Call to Action: *Ending Extreme Poverty, A Road to Peace*." Signing it shows your belief in the dignity and human rights of all and in the potential of active partnership with those who live in poverty and strive daily to overcome it. It puts your name, words, and actions alongside the multitudes of people worldwide who stand united for a world free of fear and want.

This Call to Action comes out of October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Initiated by people in poverty, this day is when people speak out for themselves and their communities about their daily efforts and their aspirations. At the United Nations, our international director Eugen Brand declared, "October 17 is for people from all walks of life to come together as equals. It gives people who feel excluded a renewed trust in their own capacities, as well as in the solidarity of others. It opens a road to peace."

Our friends at St. Mary's Center in Oakland, CA, know this. Marking October 17 for the first time, they made giant puppets of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. to guide their march to City Hall. The articles herein share how others answer that Call to Action, on October 17 and throughout the year: diverse gatherings to mark this key day; lessons learned from post-Katrina travels in the South; and motivations of supporters allied with our cause.

Please sign the enclosed Call to Action. Take it to others to sign. Use it to energize actions for overcoming poverty. We're waiting to hear from you.

## Ending Extreme Poverty: A Road to Peace



Photo: David Bacon

**Oakland, CA, October 17, 2006:** Over 300 people, including children from local schools and representatives from over 40 organizations, gathered at St. Mary's Center for low-income families. They took part in a program of testimonies, song, and acclamations of "Steps to End Poverty" before marching to City Hall and other civic buildings, accompanied by hand-made giant puppets of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. One participant, Larry, said of the event, "Gandhi went without food to make a statement for the hungry. Martin Luther King stood for social justice for all. It was special to band together in unity to represent better health care and the needs of the homeless." Kathy echoed by saying, "It was moving to walk the streets with children and seniors singing, 'End Poverty Now.' We need this in our country."

## International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

### Standing Up Together Against Poverty

By Vicki Soanes

As our representative to the United Nations, I work closely with other organizations to ensure that people living in poverty are at the center of relevant discussions and events. In 2006, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) in association with the Millennium Campaign appealed to world citizens to "Stand Up" against poverty to mark October 17. They planned to note the number in the Guinness Book of World Records.

In our view, people living in poverty stand up every day to survive and to ensure a better future for their children and their communities. They and others initiated October 17 as a day worldwide to publicly acknowledge those efforts and re-affirm a common commitment. The campaign behind the "Stand Up" event seemed to be overlooking that. I was concerned that millions of people unable to attend formal events would not be counted, that their own crucial, daily efforts to fight poverty would go un-noted.

The organizers of New York's Stand Up event, the Millennium Campaign staff, heard these concerns. They invited Fourth World member

from Guatemala, Doña Lorena Tepeu, to speak at their global landmark event in Times Square. In a highly media-focused event, she was the only speaker with experience of extreme poverty. After struggling for weeks to get a US visa and to prepare as a delegate, Doña Lorena had one minute to express a lifetime of experience. She had been asked to thank people for coming to "Stand Up Against Poverty." What Doña Lorena decided to say was that it was an honor for the crowd, the UN officials, and the celebrities to be there with her, joining the millions of people who stand up against poverty every day – those who are living in it.

That day, I thought of the world of difference between this Times Square event and Doña Lorena's daily life working at a garbage dump. Throughout, she retained an incredible dignity. She never wavered in her goal to represent families struggling in extreme poverty. For me it was, and continues to be, an honor to stand with her and others like her.



Photo: Leslie Caraballo

Fourth World member Doña Lorena Tepeu from Guatemala represented people living in poverty worldwide at the "Stand Up against Poverty" event in New York's Times Square, to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

### Doña Lorena Tepeu Speaks in Times Square, NY

I am proud to be a delegate for Guatemala and to represent all of the families in the world who suffer from extreme poverty in the North as well as in the South. We have this opportunity to state that we don't accept that extreme poverty is inevitable. We want to listen to others, and to be listened to by others. I have been a widow for four years, and am a mother of five children. I work in a landfill, separating the recyclables from the garbage. In this work there are many risks. In January there was an accident, when a landslide of garbage buried and killed eight people: seven men and one woman and their bodies could not be recovered. In spite of this, I don't feel like less of a person, because I am working for the future of my children; to give them a place in which to live, a place in which nobody is able to take them away. I fight for their health and their right to an education. That was also my husband's dream. For this we ask that you will remember that we are all human beings, and therefore have value. We remember those who are not here with us who fought for the same cause to come together and take up the challenge of creating a world without extreme poverty. Every day people living in extreme poverty stand up. By standing up today, you unite with us in our daily struggle against poverty. To do this is an honor for everyone.

# Door-to-Door Activism in the South

By Maria Sandvik

*Our volunteers from New Orleans have been traveling in the South. Maria Sandvik relates lasting impressions and lessons learned.*

We met Geraldine Rumley and Van Parker on the outskirts of Lafayette, LA, in a trailer community for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. With support from the Lafayette Hurricane Survivors Coalition, they have been grassroots leaders, going door to door in 13 trailer parks to inform people of community information sessions so residents would not remain isolated. Van spent months driving people wherever they needed to go, free of charge. He got to know all the parks, the people, and their daily struggles. People wanted to take advantage of

job and educational opportunities, but the city bus lines stopped miles from the trailers. *"If people have transportation, they can take care of themselves,"* Van explained. He and Geraldine organized meetings between residents and public officials. After months of discussions, their efforts paid off. City officials set up shuttles connecting the trailer parks to the city's main bus. Geraldine's and Van's commitment reinforces our belief that any project's success must start from the strength and ingenuity of the people most affected.

### Building on Positive Steps

Tommy Cowsar is partnering with people in a disheartening living situation at a 600-unit trailer park near Baton Rouge, LA. Meant to be temporary, it will likely remain home for some of the most disadvantaged families for many years. Since Katrina, he has volunteered with residents working for what they want to see in their new community. These initiatives started with on-site daytime learning activities for young people unable to register in local public schools. With volunteers from local universities, businesses, and organizations, projects have included an after-school program, a community garden, a library, and outings into

Baton Rouge. Tommy takes his cues from the residents and has a gift for seeing the positive steps achieved, overcoming obstacles, and adjusting when necessary. *"I don't take 'no' for an answer,"* Tommy explains. *"I take it as, 'Okay, we can't do it that way, so we'll find another way.'"*



Fourth World Volunteer Maria Victoire with Tommy Cowsar (left) at a new community garden in Baker Trailer Park.

together in a home they owned, but are now on separate sides of the country. In Austin, TX, one mother lived through the evacuation from New Orleans only to have her children removed by social services shortly after arriving. *"I have raised nine children!"* she asserted. *"My oldest is older than the social worker who comes here!"* Photos of her children cover her apartment; she speaks of each child with pride and longing, and struggles daily to bring them back home.

I see how important family and community are for everyone. In our travels, families facing the isolation of displacement and continued hardship have shown us how especially important such ties are in the struggle to overcome poverty. As we continue

### Photos Help Keep Family Ties

When visiting displaced families we know, sharing photos is central. *"She's my best friend!"* exclaimed Bree in Houston, unable to tear her eyes away from a card with photos and messages from former neighbors now back in New Orleans. Marie, a teenager in Atlanta, displayed 3 generations of family photos, some damaged by floodwaters, which she had painstakingly assembled into albums. Marie's family had lived all



From New Orleans, on October 17, Kiyondra spreads the message.

meeting new people and organizations in the South, I want to bring the lessons taught by these families' efforts to the forefront in the fight against poverty.



Geraldine Rumley (bottom left) and friends from Lafayette with Maria Sandvik (back right) during a homecoming visit to New Orleans.

# October 17: International Day Mobilizes People Throughout the U.S.

## New York City



Fourth World members and guests gathered for a local celebration the weekend before October 17. They shared good food, conversation, and testimonies that speakers later presented at the United Nations, including Rashawn and Dashawn Williams (above) presenting their Taporí Silhouettes:



Rashawn, *"I chose to make an airplane because I want to be a pilot. Being a pilot is a way to make money and help people that are in need."*

Dashawn, *"October 17 is a time where kids from around the world can make things that people will pay attention to. One person will pass it to another, and on and on like that."*

On October 17 local activists, international guests, and United Nations friends came together for the official commemoration at the UN. Speakers voiced their struggles and hopes. Nan O'Brien, of the Irish Traveller Movement, emphasized the importance of the solidarity that occurs on this day: *"I went through a lot of hardship when my family lived on the roadside. I understand what people are going through because I went through very hard times myself... I'm glad these talks are going on today on October 17 all over the world, especially in Dublin. I am also glad to be here in New York. It is great to see people gathering and standing up for people's rights and for the ones who cannot be here."*



Photo: Leslie Caraballo

Photo: Dierdre Mauss



Commemorations took place in two cities in the state. In **Monroe**, JoAnne Crone, Betty Cummings, Fr. Mark Watson, and Rev. Dale Farley learned about the Day from our New Orleans volunteers traveling in the South. They took up the challenge to bring people together for an event centered around the testimonies of people in poverty. At a day shelter, people joined in songs, personal stories, and prayer. Brother Reuben reflected on the commemoration: *"I didn't know there was a day for us to be listened to. It's important for us to have a time to be heard."*

In **New Orleans**, local allies organized the October 17 celebration around the theme, *"Bring Our Families Home Together."* It was an opportunity for people of different backgrounds now back in the City to celebrate their efforts to rebuild community and share their solidarity with those who have not yet returned. The group obtained and displayed a proclamation from Governor Kathleen Blanco, declaring October 17, 2006 as *"Day for the Eradication of Poverty and the Homecoming of Families."*



Photo: Dierdre Mauss



## Southwestern Virginia



Some 50 people gathered in Clintwood, Virginia, to explore the theme *"10 Years of Welfare Reform: Where are We Now?"* They took part in an informative, interactive game using economic and social statistics about the area. Personal testimonies and traditional music rounded out the highlights for this annual potluck to mark October 17.

## Washington, D.C.



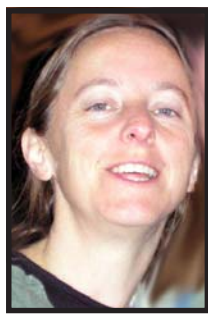
Messages and artwork from local school children involved in the Taporí Silhouette Campaign inspired Fourth World members and friends from the National Coalition for the Homeless as together they marked October 17 through an exchange of international testimonies, a simple meal, and internet communication with other gatherings around the country.

### Want to hear more about October 17?

Learn about celebrations in places like Kalamazoo, Michigan at <http://www.oct17.org>.

## How I Became an Ally

By Robin Mohr



From 1991-1994, I was a member of the Fourth World Volunteer Corps. For nearly ten years after I moved to San Francisco, I stayed in occasional contact with some the volunteers I had known in the U.S. and France. One of my favorite ways of helping the organization was interviewing and sharing my experience with prospective interns from the West Coast.

### Not "Poor Enough?"

In 2004, I became the program officer of a scholarship program to assist low-income youth to attend a group of Catholic schools. One morning, I was meeting the head of a middle school that serves low-income children. I was admiring how nice the newly remodeled facility looked. The paint was fresh and they'd received some donations, so their offices were comfortable for the staff and inspiring for the children, many of whom live in a neighborhood with a lot of filth and run-down buildings. The headmistress told me that recently a philanthropist visited and decided they weren't "poor enough" to help, because the school didn't look rundown and dirty. I was indignant. I told her about Fourth World Movement founder Fr. Joseph Wresinski and the Fourth World Movement's insistence that the poor, too, have a right to beauty, to not always be surrounded by things already broken. She asked if I could give her something written about that.

So that evening I went home and looked through my old files and books from the Fourth

World Movement. I started skimming through *Artisans of Democracy: How Ordinary People, Families in Extreme Poverty, and Social Institutions Become Allies to Overcome Social Exclusion*, by Jona Rosenfeld and Bruno Tardieu. I was looking for examples to share with my friend about people in schools making a difference, but I got caught up in reading the stories for myself.

### I Can Make a Difference.

I realized that I always identified with the Fourth World Volunteer involved, and I felt somewhat inadequate – you know, "I'm not a volunteer anymore; I'm not in direct contact with families in poverty anymore, so I can't really make a difference," but in reading *Artisans*, I realized that, no, I wasn't a volunteer anymore, but I could be an ally right now. I could influence the place where I work, how our money is spent, which authorities we consult. I could use the attitudes and knowledge I developed with the Fourth World Movement in the work I was doing now. I started feeling like a competent ally.

I started to encourage the schools to give more scholarships to children who came from more difficult backgrounds. The administrators could take more risks because they knew that I would understand and support them. I dialogued with Fourth World Movement teams and their Research Institute and ordered Fourth World books as reference material for my office. I was able to remind the Board for which I worked of their stated commitment "to serve the poorest." The founder of their order, like Joseph Wresinski, tried also to reach the least advantaged child. I was able to spell out for them what that would look like and the different ways we would have to measure success. I also raised often the question and tried to influence the schools'

partnership with the children's parents of these children. In the end, I was able to have some impact in job, even if I couldn't change everything.

A side effect of becoming an ally was that I was able to do some fundraising for the renovation of the Fourth World House in New York among other former volunteer corps members because I no longer felt guilty about being a former volunteer.



Robin at a Street Library as a Fourth World Volunteer.

### What it Means to be an Ally

It is important to me to use the word "ally" to describe my role in the Fourth World Movement, rather than "supporter" which has been more common in the U.S. I am happy to support the work of volunteers with money, ideas, introductions, and encouraging words. I also want to acknowledge that I have my own role in our work together. As an ally, I, too, am part of our partnership against poverty.

Robin is also an active member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). You can reach her through her blog, *What Canst Thou Say?* at <http://robinmsf.blogspot.com/>. She lives in San Francisco with her husband and two children

## A Donor's Story

By Tina Plerhoples

Peggy Simmons became involved with the Fourth World Movement in 1993 in Washington, D.C. and went on to work as a Volunteer Corps member in New York City, London, and France. She spent "four very rich years" at the youth center in France and learned a lot from dedicated youth from different countries and backgrounds. She now manages a community college bookstore in Oakland, California that matches her donations to the Fourth World Movement.

"I have enough personal knowledge of the Movement to trust it," says Peggy. "I trust that the work is done for the dignity of everyone; that it is for real, long-term change and not quick fixes or the appearance of quick fixes, and that the Movement is doing as much as it can to make sure no one is forgotten. I also trust that the money is going to the most important part, the projects, and not to mismanaged administrative costs, over-paid executives, or lobbyists."

Another reason Peggy donates is she believes the Movement will not sacrifice quality for quantifiable work and will not share families' private information in order to 'report' to a funder. She also understands it is easier to get funding for projects than for the volunteers' stipends, health coverage, and housing.

Peggy works at a bookstore owned by The Follett Higher Education Group, a private company that manages over 750 college bookstores in the U.S. and Canada. Their gift-matching program will match charity and education donations of any permanent employee, up to \$12,000 per employee per year. "It was a simple process," Peggy tells us, "at least on my end." Peggy and her husband, Alain Claudel, continue to support the Movement and are greatly appreciated by all those involved.



Peggy Simmons (above with husband, Alain) donates to the Fourth World Movement using the employer matching gift program at the bookstore where she works.

### Employer Matching Gift Program

Employer matching gift programs are an easy way to increase the impact of your donation. Many employers encourage support of non-profit organizations by offering to match employee donations. Your employer might be one of them. Here is how you can participate:

1. Find out if your employer has a matching gift program.
2. Obtain a matching gift application from your Human Resources Department.
3. Fill out the matching gift application form and send it to:  
**Fourth World Movement  
7600 Willow Hill Dr.  
Landover, MD 20785**
4. We will complete the form and send it to your employer.
5. Your employer will send the matching gift to the Fourth World Movement once the application is approved.

The Fourth World Movement is recognized as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization by the IRS and qualifies for corporate matching programs.

**Thank you for your support!**

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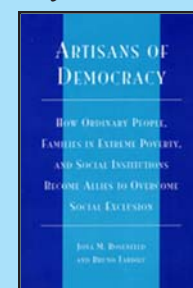
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"A penny for your searches..." We will receive a penny every time you search the internet using [www.GoodSearch.com](http://www.GoodSearch.com). Just go to the site, type in Fourth World Movement as your "charity," and start your search! You'll get your answer; we'll get funds. Thanks!

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Please read and sign this **Call to Action**.  
Cut it out and send it to our mailing address below.

### Count Me In!

- I am in solidarity with all those who are fighting throughout the world to eliminate extreme poverty.
- I want to contribute to promoting respect for the dignity of all people, and their effective access to human rights.
- I want to join efforts to enable those living in extreme poverty and exclusion to participate fully in their societies, including the commemoration of October 17th, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
- I ask all members of civil society, local and national authorities, and the United Nations to:
  - Consider those in extreme poverty as the first to take action in the fight against poverty;
  - Ensure that people living in poverty fully participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs that concern them and that are inspired by a commitment to a world without poverty - a world where the rights to family life, decent work, social, cultural and political participation are expected;
  - Support events organized each October 17th to ensure that the participation of people with direct experience of poverty be at the heart of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
  - Participate in an ongoing, long-term dialogue with people who, in refusing to accept extreme poverty, are building peace.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Please keep me up to date on this appeal

I would like to take action by:

- Encouraging others to sign; please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies
- Participating on October 17
- Supporting financially

Please send me more information on anti-poverty actions I can join

I am signing because:

You can also view, print, and sign the Call to Action online at:

<http://www.oct17.org/site/Count-me-in.html>

## Taking Action Together

By Diana Skelton

**Antananarivo, Madagascar. October 17, 2006:** Families living in chronic poverty and other Fourth World members for the first time were able to play a significant role in the official UN observance of this day. One member of the preparation team, U.S. Deputy Ambassador George N. Sibley, was even able to ensure that two delegates from a very impoverished neighborhood joined the Malagasy prime minister in cutting a ribbon to open the day's information fair.

Mr. Sibley also wrote a personal testimony for the occasion. He spoke of his own childhood in Mexico when he saw children by railroad tracks looking for scattered kernels of corn that might have fallen from a freight train:

*Like many Americans, ...I believe we each create our own destiny. But only a fool would say that I and kids picking up corn had the same opportunity to stride down the path to success, to dream big dreams and make them a reality. Let us focus today on hopes and dreams; let us focus on our common humanity and our universal right to dream of a better world: ...not only for ourselves and for our children, but for our neighbors and their children, and for our friends – rich or poor, Minister or beggar – and their children. Let us remember today that this better world does not come about because someone else takes action. It comes about, my friends, because we take action... together.*

Another American in Madagascar whose personal commitment makes a difference is Joshua D. Poole. In his role as the Embassy's Special Programs Manager, and as a musician, Mr. Poole prepared adults living in chronic poverty to sing as a choir for October 17. As a former Peace Corps Volunteer, Mr. Poole has seen many situations of poverty in Madagascar. Nevertheless, he says,

*A visit to the garbage dump the families called home opened my eyes to their poor conditions. I made a pledge to continue our support. Later, the Fourth World team led me out to the rural relocation site for some of these same families. Although the soil quality is poor and the areas for growing rice are few, efforts by the families continue. Over 50 people gathered to talk with me about new agriculture techniques they could use to improve their yields. The best part of my visit was the excitement the families showed upon my arrival, ...happy I had followed through with my promise to continue the support. Their smiles and motivation to improve their lives will draw me back for other possible projects.*

Some of Mr. Poole's support for these families came from the Ten-Dollar Fund, through which embassy staff make and allocate personal donations. The commitment of all these people to taking action together helps move forward the partnerships we can build.

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**Fourth World Movement/USA**

**National Center:**  
7600 Willow Hill Drive  
Landover, MD 20785  
Tel: 301-336-9489  
DC Office: 202-393-2822  
nationalcenter@4thworldmovement.org  
www.4thworldmovement.org

**Local offices/contacts:**  
172 First Avenue - New York, NY 10009  
Tel: 212-228-1339 - nycteam@4thworldmovement.org

281 Wolcott Ave. - Middletown, RI 02842  
Tel: 401-847-8863 - gsholmes@cox.net

304 Arabella St. - New Orleans, LA 70115  
Tel: 504-899-9950 - neworleans@4thworldmovement.org

1297 Reedy Ridge Rd. - Clintwood, VA 24269  
Tel: 276-835-1540 - fanelli@adelphia.net

**International Movement ATD Fourth World**  
107 Ave. du General Leclerc  
95480 Pierrelaye, France  
email: information@aid-fourthworld.org



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:**  
Call to Action:  
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A Road to Peace”

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Landover, MD 20785-4658