



TAPORI Children Lead the Way with Friendship

“Friendship is Stronger than Hunger.”

One of the ten best pictures of the first year presidency, as selected by *Time*, is of young Sasha Obama standing in the Oval Office and her dad marveling that she had found her way there so easily, while he was still attempting to get his bearings. The President recognized what we all discover at some point: children find their way in complex situations that we adults find very challenging.

ATD Fourth World* founder Joseph Wresinski knew from his own experience that families in poverty often put their children forward when dealing with people who hold power over their lives, not simply in a quest for empathy, but because children are the motivation and source of strength for their struggles. When children live or see a situation that is unfair, they find their way to adults' hearts and can prod them into action. Children's innate sense of fairness, and how they create justice through the simple notion of friendship, led Wresinski to create the dynamic of Tapori. For over 40 years, Tapori has been a worldwide network of learning, expression, and friendship among children from different backgrounds and cultures.

We combine this edition of the *Fourth World Journal* with the *Tapori* newsletter because children's simple expressions of friendship provide an essential message for us adults. This *Tapori* newsletter relays the creativity and courage of real children in Haiti, as they face the devastation of the recent earthquake. It invites other children to send drawings, words of encouragement, and other signs of support. Readers learn how six-year-old Mackenson and his friends from Haiti sparked a worldwide exchange of art and messages which helped Tapori children organize real-life gatherings in 2009. The children took their messages to local, national, and international leaders and continue to do so.

Last December, I attended one of these gatherings with Shannon, a young volunteer who works with Tapori and our Street Library program in New York. Twenty-four children from nine countries gathered in Switzerland for a meeting with Mrs. Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner at the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. The children prepared messages about themselves, others they know, and what actions they take together. Through simple play, art, and song, they put a lot of energy into “making friends,” and it got them past differences in language, culture, and social background. Through their efforts, they lived out the essential points of their message: include everyone, respect and treat people fairly, and stick with them. As Tapori delegates from West Africa phrased it:

We don't want our parents to be humiliated because of their poverty. Those who respect our parents are our friends. We want all children to become friends because friendship allows you to live happy, even if you are poor, even if you have nothing. Friendship is stronger than hunger.

There is power and depth to what the children put behind friendship. We adults need to let it prod us to take up or change our action. Before the start of the meeting at the UN, Mrs. Kang's staff had alerted us she would need to leave within a few minutes. However, the children's profound simplicity went straight to the heart of matters. Mrs. Kang stayed.

In 2010, children will lead us toward an international Tapori gathering in our nation's Capital on October 17, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. They invite young people to support them—those who grew up in the Tapori dynamic and others excited to join. They want to create friendship. They want to see their parents heard and respected. They want to express their own message and inspire the President of the United States and others who hold responsibility for the common good. The children are ready to lead the way in uniting people of different backgrounds to *strive together to end poverty*. Let's all get in *STEP* with them.

--Jill Cunningham

*Fourth World Movement is the US branch of the International Movement ATD Fourth World (**All Together in Dignity**) whose aim is to end persistent poverty and exclusion. Families with a lived experience of struggle and other members act together from the basic principles of the *inalienable dignity of each human being, the necessity to learn from families living in persistent poverty, and the responsibility of all people to unite to end poverty*. The Fourth World Movement puts a priority on those families who are the most disconnected because of a history of poverty. Projects start from families' aspirations, especially the hopes parents have for their children. They emphasize the sharing of knowledge and skills in preschool settings, after school literacy and art programs, youth service learning projects, creative and technical workshop settings, and through civic engagement forums that bring people from different backgrounds together in an atmosphere of mutual learning and respect. Fulltime, long-term Fourth World Volunteers facilitate projects in Boston, New York City, greater Washington, DC, the Appalachian region of Virginia, and New Orleans. For a complete description of programs, see our 2009 audit. Call us or visit www.4thworldmovement.org.



The long-term presence of our team in Port-au-Prince (seen here in March '09) lends strength to the efforts of families in the most extreme poverty, as they search for loved ones, shelter and health care, mobilize with young people in rebuilding efforts, and resume a dynamic of gatherings, cultural activities and pre-schools.



The *Tapori* newsletter activity asks children to color words of encouragement for Haiti, just like Kiyondra from New Orleans did for family and friends after Hurricane Katrina. www.tapori.org

ALL TOGETHER IN DIGNITY Connecting Our Daily Lives to Haiti

“We're still here. We do not know how life will begin again, but it is solidarity that is guiding our country.”

--Saint-Jean Lhérisant, Fourth World Volunteer
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

ATD Fourth World has been active in Haiti for nearly 30 years, creating opportunities for people to come together to overcome poverty. Families living in extreme poverty have partnered with full-time Fourth World Volunteers, supporters and local organizations in efforts to ensure that all people have access to knowledge and training, health services, and creativity and culture.

For several weeks after the devastating earthquake of January 12, no emergency aid reached the neighborhoods where our team, members, and partners live and work. They have relied on the courage, skills, and solidarity among themselves. One Fourth World Volunteer in Haiti tells us:

“It is impressive to see how people stand strong. Despite all the difficulties, even families who are very poor find small solutions day after day, as always. Sleeping outside, living with no electricity, walking great distances to get water—they're used to all that; that's not enough to knock them down. What can, is injustice, seeing that they struggle every time, but that their efforts backfire. They are told they slow down the flow of aid, that they are in the way! Because these families have not given up, the country will not die. But once again, they are the ones who pay the highest price. [...] We must all be as determined as the families are to survive.”

On February 3, six other Fourth World Volunteers arrived with some much-needed medicine, food, and supplies. They also brought messages of encouragement, colorful drawings, photo albums, books and games, because members requested such things. They are vital for standing strong and continuing to strive together. With these reinforcements, and the energy of Haitian young people, members have taken up action in three major directions:

-**food aid** (in partnership with organizations sensitive to people's dignity in such situations of distribution),

-**Street Libraries** and cultural activities with children, and

-**free medical treatment** in a resumed partnership with our long-term friends at the Haitian organization St. Michel Health Center.

To find out more, and discover and offer ways to help, please consult and share widely our international website www.atd-fourthworld.org.

To donate, simply put “Haiti” in the memo of any check made out to “Fourth World Movement” and mail it to the address above. Or, make a secure, online donation via our website. All money will go to support the efforts of our team and members in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

