

A WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED FROM MY SHOULDERS



In 2017, ATD Fourth World invited people around the world to document real-life “Stories of Change” arising from situations of injustice and exclusion caused by extreme poverty. These stories, from activists, community leaders, and others, show that when people work together, real change can happen. [More about the “Stories of Change” blog.](#)

Culture was very important in Myriam’s life. It took daring, but she convinced her work colleagues that it’s also important to groups who do not normally visit a multimedia library.

By Myriam Boulahia (France)

I have doubted my ability to do things so many times. Despite this, I carried on without

always knowing how.

I'm now a librarian. I welcome the public to the Civic Life area of a multimedia library. It's an area that is dedicated to knowledge exchange and it is very important for community life and citizenship. I greet the users, help them to search for documents and answer their questions.

What I like most is working closely with people who need human interaction. I see the Civic Life area as a bridge to other areas of the library.

For a long time, I never thought it would be possible for me to be in a place where everyone can speak and feel that others hear them, a place where everyone feels they belong. I'm happy at work and here is my wonderful story.

Deciding to Speak Up

Every two months we have a meeting at work where we can talk openly about anything. On one particular morning, several colleagues were discussing the type of people who come to the library. The head of the library's Customer Relations Department discussed the importance of access to culture for people who are unlikely to visit the library. My colleagues were talking about young people who don't typically come to the library.

As the discussion continued, I wanted to speak up. I wanted to finally tell my colleagues how culture played such an important role in my life. Finally, I overcame my fears and decided to speak.

"Having access to culture every day is actually very important for me. Growing up, life was difficult for my family. There were no books because we didn't think they were for people like us. But thanks to ATD Fourth World and a [training program I did to become a "reading facilitator"](#), I was able to have access to culture. It allowed me to discover and learn many things.

I was exactly like the young people you're talking about. When I came to the library in 1992, I hardly dared to say hello. I didn't talk in meetings and I felt out of place. We families in the "fourth world" want to be able to say what we think. We want to have access to knowledge. We want people to listen to us and understand us. This is also why I love the work that I do in the Civic Life area. It's why I'm very attached to the people I welcome to the library. I love the work we do to improve how we welcome the public and allow people to participate in all kinds of projects."

A Weight Off my Shoulders

I was shaking as I spoke and I was bright red. I had never told any of my colleagues what I said that morning. However, I felt that someone had taken a weight off my shoulders.

But, above all, I appreciated that they had listened to me and given me their attention. I had waited for this moment for a long time, to finally tell them who I am, why I love what I do, and why I do my job every day.

Speaking up has given me even more strength and belief in my work. It's also a way for me to say thank you to ATD. Without all the people who helped and supported me, I wouldn't have had the courage to keep going. I'm finally proud of my journey and of this life which is mine.

[Read more Stories of Change.](#)