



The Roles We Play  
A Method of Genuine Participation

## **Prejudice** [ˈpreɪdʒʊdɪs]

### **Origin:**

*From the Latin praejudicium, from prae 'in advance' and judicium 'judgement' – to judge beforehand or prejudgement.*

### **Definition:**

*An unfair, preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.*

## Timeline

### 2009

Origins of the project

### 2010

Project participants involved in events in the UK and Belgium to mark the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

### 2011

Residential weekends held in April, June and September

### 2012

Residential weekend held in April  
Twelve week-long participatory film project  
*The Roles We Play* Film showcased in a South London cinema

### 2013

Residential weekend held in February

### 2014

Residential weekend held in March  
Publication and launch of book *The Roles We Play: Recognising the Contribution of People in Poverty* 5000 copies produced

### 2015

Residential weekends held in March and May  
Multimedia exhibition tours the UK and Ireland including events in London, Brighton, Worcester, Bradford, Sheffield, Southampton, Norwich, Bristol and Dublin

### 2016

Residential weekends held in January, February and August  
Multimedia exhibition tour reaches Oxford, Belfast, London and Guildford

### 2017

Residential weekends held in February and March

### 2018 - 2019

*The Roles We Play: A Model of Genuine Participation* Film & Report launched in The House of Lords London

*"I was with people who I could trust and who could trust me. It was a safe group and this was very important."*

**Thomas**



## Foreword

*Words like co-production, co-design, genuine participation and ownership are becoming commonplace in the anti-poverty sector. However, truly understanding how these concepts work in practice is not straightforward, nor is measuring whether projects that claim to be collaborative truly are. For any given project, such evaluative limitations can lead to misunderstanding and misconception for all involved, while in the bigger picture they stunt the development of best practice methodology in this area.*

### **What does genuine participation look like?**

*Genuine participation comes in many forms and is not a one-size-fits-all. However, the project should reflect certain guiding principles. For example: clear agenda-setting from the outset with all project participants; discovering and taking seriously the contribution and expertise of all; aiming for shared learning and equal appreciation of the input of each person; making decisions together at all stages and continually evaluating progress over the timescale of the project; and being open to learning together.*

*Recognising a person's expertise and supporting them to share this expertise is central to any meaningful participation. A lot of good practice takes place already in the UK anti-poverty sector in community action,*

*research and policy development, yet we need to go further in taking seriously the experience and expertise of people living in poverty in policy change and development. The threat of tokenistic involvement remains a challenge and can only really be overcome through strong relationship building grounded in the practice of mutual respect.*

*We constantly hear that people with an experience of poverty do not have a voice, do not participate in civil society, do not have agency, and so on. This is such an outdated and corrosive logic. The Roles We Play shines a spotlight on that fallacy and aims to move beyond it.*

*Our society would surely benefit from championing more widespread inclusive action based on recognising and validating the experience and expertise of all. Once we begin to muster that wider agreement, the next steps should look at making meaningful participation and co-design common practice. This project is just one example of what meaningful participation can look like. This report aims to show, through a collaborative lens, what can be achieved when we take the time to develop alternative, more inclusive, approaches to anti-poverty work that share equal control with the real experts on poverty themselves.*

**Dann Kenningham**

Project Coordination,  
ATD Fourth World

*There have been many stories about people living in poverty in the media recently but by and large they have been negative stories that demonise and represent 'the poor' as 'other'. The effect can be to distance the viewer or reader and no doubt make them less sympathetic to the policies needed to tackle poverty.*

*This is why this project is so important. It has allowed people with experience of poverty to tell their own stories in the way that they want to tell them. In doing so, people who have not experienced poverty can better understand that, just like them, people in poverty exercise agency in their everyday lives, but they do so within much greater constraints.*

*The Roles We Play project recognises, listens to and values people living in poverty and I hope the report will reach a wide audience.*

**Professor the Baroness Lister  
of Burtersett, CBE**

Member of the House of Lords

# The Roles We Play: A Method of Genuine Participation

ATD Fourth World, in partnership with artist and photographer Eva Sajovic, is proud to present *The Roles We Play: A Model of Genuine Participation*.

This new report, alongside the film of the same name, traces the course of the project over the last decade and its attempts to provide a forum for people with experience of poverty to challenge the widespread negative stereotypes of their lives by giving participants the tools to speak out and have their voices heard.

In highlighting its different stages—from photo exhibition and series of residential weekends to participatory film project, full-colour book and multimedia exhibition—the report explores the impact of the methodology at the heart of the project, in terms of the creative work co-produced and the personal development experienced by people living in poverty through this process.

“Poverty takes away ownership of our own lives. Every agency we come into contact

with has something to say about our lives as if we can't speak for ourselves and are bound to fail. That's why this project and this film are so important,” says Moraene Roberts, a member of the ATD Fourth World UK National Co-ordination Team and project participant.

“Full participation is more than just turning up; it means being involved as an equal partner at every stage from inception to conclusion. To be in control of the texts, the images and the concept behind it all means this project is ours and not just an attempt to shape us to meet someone else's expectations. We own it and we are proud of it.”



*The Roles We Play: A Model of Genuine Participation* was made possible by support from The Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

*The Inspiration for The Roles We Play: Recognising the Contributions of People in Poverty* came from a desire to shed light on what people with lived experience of poverty do to combat poverty in their everyday lives. Through celebrating these efforts and achievements, this project offers a refreshingly alternative critique on the very human, yet corrosive, nature of both poverty and the mainstream public narratives about this social issue. In attempting to tackle the prejudice so often shouldered by the most vulnerable members of our society, this project seeks to show that only through reciprocal efforts rooted in empathy, not pity or charity, can we develop our human capacity for change.

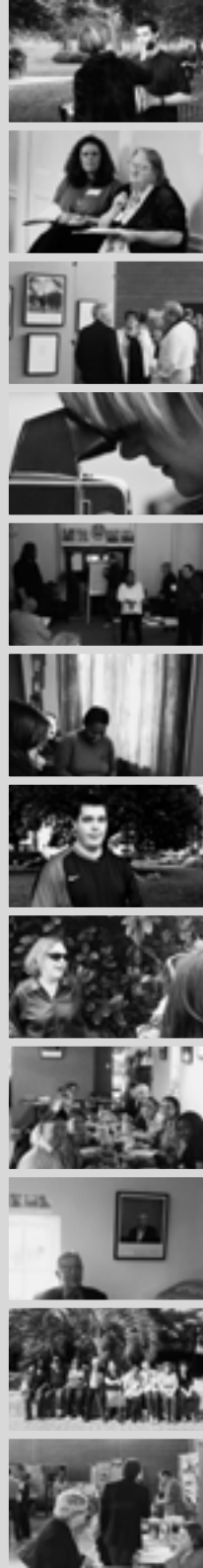
Each participant has been involved in all aspects of the project, both in front of and behind the camera. All those featured in this book have worked extremely hard to tell their stories in their own words and have made the brave decision to put themselves in the public spotlight.

#### Amanda

*The time it takes to build up the trust to remove your mask and start to feel comfortable and confident within the company of others is hard for many people to understand, and then to start and feel useful and involved in thinking with others is such a long journey... it is something that can't be taken for granted... it can be life changing.*

#### Patricia

*It's one of the best things I've ever been involved in. It shows ordinary people with ordinary lives who go that extra mile to help other people. Being part of the book and the tour shows people there is a lot more to ATD Fourth World's work than they think. I feel I can speak out more now, and when the exhibition goes around the country I feel proud to be associated with it.*



## The Importance of Genuine Participation

Traditional methods of data collection involved interviews with respondents, transcription, analysis and the writing of a report in which a selection of interviewees' comments were incorporated. While this method did represent respondents' experiences and views as much as possible according to the original remit, nevertheless the ultimate power was retained by those conducting the research who chose what to include and exclude. The terminology used in this approach – researchers and evaluators on one side and respondents, interviewees and subjects on the other – served to underline this discrepancy in power.

The full participation of those with lived experience of the topic being explored redresses this imbalance in power and control. With the approach used in *The Roles We Play* those with the experience of poverty were the experts. They were not passive respondents, answering a set of (often) pre-determined questions but had control of what was asked, which issues were important to them and which they wanted to be emphasised, and of what should be included in the final publication. This gave them, not the organisers, facilitators or funders, ownership of the project and of what ultimately appeared in the public domain.

What full participation provides is the hinterland of the people who matter. While traditional-style interviews typically provide statements of what people's lives are like when they live in poverty, this participatory

*“We always did workshops and exercises together as a group. We was in good company and, after a while, I didn't feel afraid to speak, I didn't feel ashamed.”*

method of working provides more detail and enriches their story by giving information about how they deal with their circumstances and crucially what else they do besides 'be poor'.

This, in fact, was the genesis of the project: when a group of people with experience of poverty met together informally and in the course of their conversations discovered how much they did for their family and community. This led to their wish to make public the fact that they were not passive recipients of welfare but in fact made a significant contribution to family and community life. It had the potential to counter the prevailing negative views of people in poverty, a view consistently peddled by many media outlets.

In the words of one of the group participants, the aim was to put 'a human face to the realities of poverty' and to cause people to question their assumptions about those with lived experience of poverty.

## Methodology of the Project

This project was allowed to evolve at its own pace over an eight-year period with regular residential meetings, allowing newcomers to join the group and for differences of opinion to be resolved without heavy-handed approaches. This was another aspect which differentiated it from the typical research project, which has inevitable time and money constraints.

Observation of the sessions showed that this informal and relaxed approach did not lead to sloppiness. Clear ground rules – relating to all aspects of safeguarding, confidentiality and respect, which had been agreed by everyone – were in place. The process was well designed and well executed by the facilitators so that the process had its own momentum. It allowed space and time for all to contribute – an important factor given that the group was very mixed in terms of participants' confidence and willingness to speak. Initial activities in a session were easy and non-threatening, giving participants the opportunity to reprise things which they had already said or written. Only later in the sessions did the facilitators move on to topics where individuals might feel more exposed or outside their comfort zone, for example having to speak without hesitation on a previously unseen topic for one minute. The fact that the activities moved quickly from one to another meant that interest never waned and there was no opportunity for boredom to set in. Ensuring the engagement of everyone present, without putting pressure on anyone, was a key feature.

## Benefits of this Approach

Inclusion, support, respect and trust were key features of the meetings. All opinions were given equal weight and consideration and there was a communal understanding that others would listen to and show an interest in what any individual was saying, regardless of whether or not there was agreement on the content. This generated an atmosphere which was safe and comfortable and where everyone who so wished could participate without fear of judgement. Although the facilitators clearly began with an expectation that everyone would participate, there was also an understanding that anyone could take a break from the group whenever this was needed or wanted.

*“The workshops and exercises were good and even though we did not know it at the time we were training, learning new skills and getting better at public speaking.”*

The outcomes from the project clearly show why this process of full participation is so important and especially so in today's climate where people who are experiencing severe financial hardship are frequently subject to casual and ill-considered labelling.

The written output provides a graphic illustration of how effective the process was. It focuses firmly on the people themselves and on their lives, not on poverty itself. In doing so it illustrates clearly how much these individuals contribute and, crucially, it contradicts the notion that people living in poverty are victims of their own misfortune. Equally important is the long-standing beneficial effect on the people involved in the process. One participant in the group described how the confidence which the project had given her impacted on many aspects of her life, and in particular in challenging the views of professionals with whom she was obliged to engage. She said: ‘It's improved my sense of self-worth and my belief that I was entitled – entitled to good service – and that I wasn't a lesser person because of my circumstances. It helped me to be assertive and know I have the right to be. I didn't have to live by whatever other people said was good for me.’

All participants might not have profited to quite this extent, but it was an experience from which everyone could derive some benefit.

**Judy Corlyon**

Professional Partner at the Tavistock Institute



In 2009, against the backdrop of the financial crisis, cuts to services and a coming general election, ATD Fourth World wanted to provide a platform for people living in poverty to challenge widespread negative stereotypes of their lives

ATD Fourth World recognised that negative stereotyping was having a corrosive impact on multiple aspects of peoples' lives, including lowering their self-esteem and increasing instances of judgemental interactions with service providers. People were hurt and angry by the highly publicised flood of negative messages and images that accused people in poverty of laziness and fraud. We wanted to respond together, to push back against this misleading picture of benefit recipients.

This image was part of a government campaign against benefit fraud that worsened the negative stereotyping of people in poverty.

### Kathy

*When you live in long-term poverty, you have to depend on services that are delivered with suspicion and disdain. They make you feel humiliated. The media and politicians speak about the poor in derogatory ways when they use terms like 'lazy', 'scroungers', 'feckless parents', and 'underclass'. The stereotyping of all poor people dehumanises them in the eyes of others.*

### James

*I remember being treated with a lot of suspicion by most people once they've learned that you're not going out to work and you are at home [the] majority of the time. The amount of suspicion that you get treated with is atrocious.*

### Moraene

*There was a change of tone towards us, from being part of a society that believed in social security, a net to support people [...]. And it was moving rapidly I think towards "everybody that claims benefits is a fraud and we have to weed out frauds, there were very few who are genuine". And it felt like it was going to get worse. It did.*

### Bea

*The media often make us seem so different, so much less than others. This project gives us the chance to show that we are just normal people trapped in abnormal circumstances that we did not create.*

### Moraene

*Poverty takes away ownership of our own lives. Every agency we come into contact with has something to say about our lives, as if we can't speak for ourselves and are bound to fail. That's why this project and this film are so important.*

### Eric

*The Roles We Play is our way of showing that we all have a meaningful role to play in society; and if you take away those roles you are taking away a huge tool that can be used in the recognition of poverty.*





*"Full participation is more than just turning up; it means being involved as an equal partner at every stage from inception to conclusion."*

**Moraene**



## To boost the capacity of participants to have their voices heard and to instil confidence for public speaking, a series of residential weekend workshops began in 2011

Residential workshops were held at Frimhurst Family House, a beautiful Victorian house set in its own extensive woodland and grounds, owned and run by ATD Fourth World. Holding the residential weekends in this location provided a setting in which to relax, spend quality time together as a group, think clearly, learn new skills, meet others in the same situation and learn together in a respectful, non-judgemental environment away from the stresses of daily life. This provided the foundation for the collaborative ethos that would become fundamental to *The Roles We Play* project.

### Residential Weekends:

In line with one of our goals, to increase participants' capability to express themselves and engage with the community, an important component of the project involved focusing on skill-development in the areas of self representation, articulation, writing, media and public speaking. We ran group discussions on the project, a capacity-building workshop on visual representation and we constantly encouraged participants to articulate why they felt the project was important from a societal perspective.

A series of short workshops and exercises were facilitated during the residential weekends, ranging from playing word games, interviewing each other on camera, speaking for 60 seconds at a podium about a selected subject, matching up brands and slogans from well-known companies, to collective painting. Workshops on self-representation

and positive image were facilitated, giving participants the chance to present themselves how they wanted (rather than being subjected to representations imposed upon them by the media and politicians). As Tammy described: "*The Roles We Play* helps you to re-evaluate your own role in life, in a positive way." For many, the opportunity to showcase positive aspects of their life was empowering and confidence-boosting.

The facilitation team would plan each weekend according to what was accomplished in the previous one, and what had still to be discussed. The facilitation team were taking the cue from what happened at the last session, and then developing the next based on what worked well. This was a way to progressively develop ways of working together with the group while keeping in mind the overall goal of building the group's capacity and confidence to speak in public.

During one residential weekend, the theme was words, phrases and slogans. The message for that weekend was that words and precision are important. It was agreed that if the group were to speak in public about ATD Fourth World, or any other issue, they should be comfortable and confident with the words used.

### Dann Kenningham

Project Coordination,  
ATD Fourth World

*"It was a safe group and this was very important. Some of the things that came up were delicate and could evoke memories for people."*

## Residential Weekends

### Patricia

*We would arrive at Frimhurst, often on the Friday afternoon, and have a meal together as a group. Then we would go into the main room and do an icebreaker and share news. The main working sessions were on the Saturday and Sunday. We all helped with the cooking and cleaning. One evening we had a big barbecue together in the garden. The workshops and exercises were good. Even though we did not know it at the time, we were training, learning new skills, and getting better at public speaking.*

### Seamus

*When we go to Frimhurst Family House, you can relax... It is like taking off a suit of armour and all your troubles from day-to-day life just slip away. I have been going there for many years and we feel at home there. It was a perfect place to work as a group; the residential sessions brought us all closer together and we built a good working relationship.*

### Thomas

*Frimhurst is a place where we don't feel judged. We feel comfortable. Having a relaxed atmosphere where you feel at ease helped everyone; we were able to open up with each other about our day-to-day struggles, as we knew others in the group had gone through similar stuff. The working time was good and it was serious. We knew we were there to work, but having time together in the breaks and evenings helped us feel like a team.*

### Tammy

*It was important because you got the peace and quiet you needed to concentrate on what you needed to do. If you were struggling with anything, you could take five minutes to think and collect your thoughts before restarting, or if you was having trouble with something, there was members of ATD Fourth World that would be on hand to help.*

### Moraene

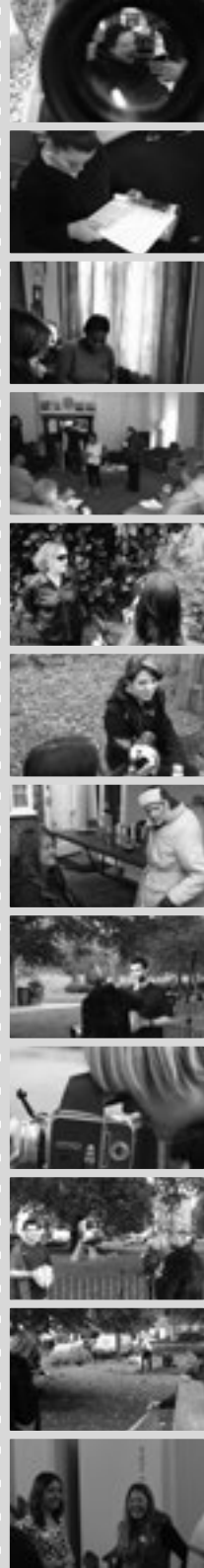
*It was important it was in Frimhurst because you don't have the time pressure of a sterile work environment. At Frimhurst, it was okay to go down and make a cup of tea. That's when you can work.*

### Eric

*Prior to the residential weekends, I had never really been asked for my opinion. Thinking about what I do and recognising what I contribute to society was so important.*

### Amanda

*We always did workshops and exercises together as a group. We was in good company and, after a while, I didn't feel afraid to speak or be judged. When we shared stories in the group, I didn't feel ashamed.*



## Peer Support

### James

*We did a lot of different exercises during the residential weekends, but the Bohemian Rhapsody one is the exercise that stands out to me. We were each given a line to say to the camera from Bohemian Rhapsody. Then it was all spliced together and made into a rather interesting and funny video with all the members of the group that were there, including the facilitators of that weekend.*

*No one had a clue what was going on until the thing got put up on the screen at the very end and it was like; 'Oh! OK, yeah right'. It was like: I see why we did that, we are getting used to a camera. So now you've got that experience. No one's as nervous as they were and it's also highly hilarious...*

### Amanda

*The Bohemian Rhapsody exercise was good, it gave us the confidence and insight of how to speak in front of a camera, whereas I'd not done that before.*

### Patricia

*Working with the camera was fun. We had the chance to use the camera and learn how it works and what you need to do when the camera is focused on you. It helps you learn to focus on what you're doing and what you're saying. Doing something fun like that stops you being afraid of the camera. It makes it easier.*

The collaborative aspect of the project allowed a feeling of solidarity to grow amongst participants, an important counter to the social exclusion many feel in their daily lives. One participant valued the fact that the project allowed her to be 'part of a team'. A peer support element naturally arose from participants experiencing the writing, photography and residential process together.

Particularly when the participants were preparing to communicate with the public, having the support of others in the group was crucial. It is often one's peers, who have undergone similar lived experiences, who are best placed to help an individual decide, in advance, what they want their boundaries to be. Caught up in the moment of a public event, a person may spontaneously decide to speak so freely about private experiences that they later regret it. Preparation beforehand with the group to speak about the types of individual and collective experiences participants were comfortable and confident sharing publicly was essential. This peer support was invaluable over time. As members of the group got to know each other better, they often turned to each other for advice or moral support regarding any challenge they might be struggling with. The group as a whole built up collective resilience. It was clear that the peer support and teamwork would continue to be a key aspect of the project.

### Tammy

*Peer support is very strong and it's very important to us. Our first meeting was small and we were asked who else we could suggest to be involved.*

*It was interesting that one person suggested a person they have run-ins with: that really showed commitment. The group dynamic brought us together.*

### Patricia

*Listening to others in the group is so important, sharing what people have been through in their lives. People have been through a lot and sharing is important for everyone. It helps people to understand what they have been through. And they are not alone.*

### Thomas

*I was with people who I could trust and who could trust me. And I knew that if I ever needed a five-minute break from the group, it was fine. It was a safe group and this was very important. Some of the things that came up were delicate and could evoke memories for people. In the group an effort was made to keep the focus on what you do, not on how you feel, so we could help each other stay on track.*

*I find it easier now that we work on small pieces rather than on the big picture; I'm not trying to cover everything any more.*

### Kathy

*The atmosphere at Frimhurst is so good, relaxing and friendly. It is great to spend time with the group here, it brings us together as a group and we covered a lot of ground.*

### Seamus

*I have spoken out at many different events since and feel proud of this. I like to always ask others in the group first who wants to speak and on what theme, we often work together. People like to feel involved; it's a partnership. Encouraging each other is the way we work at ATD Fourth World. We people who have more experience can help the new people.*

### Eric

*Knowing the people that I was working with did make me feel a lot more comfortable than going into a cold environment where you know nobody, because in that situation I would have just clammed up.*

*Probably the reason why the project has helped me is the support that I received from most of the members of the group and the support we've given each other when we've been out and about in different places. Somebody could ask me a direct question that I wouldn't feel comfortable answering, but I knew others from the group would support me and answer it.*

### Moraene

*When you see somebody else who has been very shy taking a confident step, it encourages others to do the same, so I think that was quite important. The more that we were together, the more people felt able to say things. It was a lovely kind of growing together although we all started on different levels of experience.*

### James

*The group's always important in how they support each other. Bringing the group together you need humour. You need people that are comfortable in each other's presence and know each other, or have at least met once. Having a non-judgemental atmosphere as well, that's what starts to make a cohesive group in my opinion. Having a common goal was useful.*

*“The workshops and exercises were good and even though we did not know it at the time we were training, learning new skills and getting better at public speaking.”*



*"The writing workshops were very helpful, reading other book titles and texts helped me choose my own words more carefully."*

**Seamus**



## Observations on Facilitation from the Residential Sessions

Facilitators used interactive and engaging exercises. This was key in supporting the breakdown of more complex issues and in contextualising societal issues.

Facilitators allowed time and space to reflect at the individual level, then share in small groups and reflect back as a whole group.

Provision was made to check in frequently to see if people understood and were on board, with a focus on those who may struggle more and need more time to think and express themselves.

Facilitators showed awareness when certain people were becoming more agitated and rolling up their cigarette, as these may be signs that a break is required. It can also be a chance to move around for a time while inviting participants to continue conversations and think in these spaces too.

**Corrinna Bain**  
ATD Fourth World UK



## Taking inspiration from the residential weekends, in 2012 a small group embarked on a participatory film project

This participatory film documents the contribution people living in poverty can make to ATD Fourth World, to their communities and to civil society.

Filmed over three months, the participants were involved at every stage, from filming footage, sound recording and drawing storyboards, to choosing excerpts to be used and the final edit. The film was shown publicly at a South London cinema and presented by participants.

ATD Fourth World facilitated this project with support from filmmaker and photographer Mihaal Danziger.

<http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/the-roles-we-play/>

### James

*It was a case of we want to get a group of people together that are going to be here for twelve weeks to learn how to do all sorts of filming, be it behind the camera, sound, directing, or editing. I thought that would be great, to learn and have the experience of being behind the camera and using it in a productive way to make a video about what we do. I didn't necessarily think about being in front of the camera at that particular time, but using the camera and gaining practical experience was useful because I could get a video camera at home to document different pieces about what does happen day to day.*

### Angela

*I was a bit scared at first, I was a bit nervous. I didn't know what to expect, but I thought: "You know what? It's good to be involved in it." It was something different totally to what I had ever done before, 'cause I'd never picked up a camera before, not even really to take pictures. So it was totally different. That was really good to actually hold a camera and film. I was like: "Wow, I've never done that before!" It was a new experience.*

### Paul

*Working on the film has given me more confidence; and with that confidence I can challenge myself more. I'm more confident in what I'm doing and how I speak to people. The film gives us another avenue to put our points across. People in poverty are just as valuable to society as those with jobs and money, and the film shows that.*

### Angela

*Going out into the street and interviewing people was scary at first. We had a few people stop and agree to speak and be on film. I would not have dared do this before.*

### Tammy

*Showing the film in a local cinema was something special. I had to stand up and present the film to a room full of guests. This was the first time I had ever done this. The response was really positive and made me think that we had made something that we can be proud of.*

*"That was really good to actually hold a camera and film. I was like: "Wow, I've never done that before!" It was a new experience."*

*"When you live in long-term poverty, you have to depend on services that are delivered with suspicion and disdain. They make you feel humiliated. The stereotyping of all poor people dehumanises them in the eyes of others."*

**Kathy**



## Making of...





Taking inspiration from the residential weekends, in 2012 a small group embarked on a participatory film project.

*"Having ownership over my own image was empowering. It gave me a sense of purpose and control."*

**Amanda**



The result of a collaboration with artist and photographer Eva Sajovic, *The Roles We Play: Recognising the Contribution of People in Poverty* was published in 2014

## Writing Workshops

All the participants wrote their own autobiographical text for the book.

In supporting this process, we ran a two day immersion writing workshop at Frimhurst Family House, Surrey. At this workshop, we explored different writing styles, techniques for telling stories and the expression of ideas. Following this, all the participants were given time to produce texts about the roles that they play in their communities.

Several participants have commented on the positive significance of this capacity-building aspect of the project. Appreciation was expressed not only for the inherent value of acquiring skills, but also for the confidence that acquiring these new skills gave participants to continue engaging with others and the community.

During one writing activity, where we sought to encourage participants to explore the nature of words by asking them to describe themselves and others with one word only, we asked participants to anonymously write one nice thing about a randomly allocated person in the room. We then read these words out as a group.

Afterwards, Alison said: "Could I just say that it's so cool that you're helping us think positive about ourselves because I'm sure I could speak for most people here that their lives have been like... they've lost confidence in their lives and a lot of people are so low that, even though they put on a show, they're low in their confidence inside themselves and that's become a way of life and for even one person to say one good thing, I know it sounds really silly, but it just means so much to people, it really does."

**Dann Kenningham**

Project Coordination,  
ATD Fourth World



### Patricia

*At first, I found it very hard to write. I felt supported in the group, but I'm not used to putting thoughts on paper... I have never tried to transfer my words into writing. The writing workshops really helped me just break the ice and get something on paper. Having Andrew and Dann as facilitators throughout the whole project really helped me build trust and not be afraid to ask for help. Then, with time, the positive support helped, and eventually I felt proud of what I did.*

### Seamus

*The writing workshops were very helpful, reading other book titles and texts helped me choose my own words more carefully. The workshops gave me great strength and enabled me to say what I wanted to say in the book. It gave us another way to see ourselves and helped us focus on what we do in the community.*

### Amanda

*The exercise where we looked at first lines from books before we were asked to write our own autobiography first line was good. It helped me formulate my own writing and gave the words more context. I never really thought about this before.*

### Moraene

*We had a workshop looking at titles and thinking about what title we would give ourselves. By the end of the workshop everyone gave themselves a title, whether it*

*was "philosopher", "activist", or "human rights campaigner". It was important to think about what that title was and how it presented you as the first thing that someone read about you. Other people's opinions can be very caustic and very damaging, and they can demoralise you and set you back a great deal. So I think, for myself, and probably for everyone that wrote their texts, it was really putting ourselves out there. We were brave but scared at times.*

*When living in poverty we don't often get time to reflect. We live in a state of constant struggle and stress. To write, you need a peaceful environment. The approach and conditions that enable us to write include facilitation, as well as time and space to think. We also need others to bounce ideas off. Having people that are willing to listen is important because approval gives you confidence. And we need to have regular meetings where our spoken words are recorded. That helps to collate and place things in time. This process of writing gave us ownership of our own thoughts. Without writing, the history of people in poverty is lost. We were able to feel proud of what we accomplished. The first time I saw the finished book, I flipped through it and then I went to the loo and cried! Because it was so much better than I had expected.*

### James

*I was completely blown away by the finished book. I was like, "That is brilliant, love it, don't want to change anything..."*

### Amanda

*I wanted to be photographed with a horse. The choice of location was also very important for me; I wanted it to portray my love of being close to nature. Nature held very positive memories for me. Having the photo of me taken on a horse resonated with a happier time when I had just left school and started working. When I look at these pictures of me, what I see is somebody that's happy and proud of themselves. I feel proud of these photos.*

### Patricia

*It took a lot of trust to invite Eva into our lives, this trust was built up over time. I had my photograph taken in South London. It was an important place for me and my family. I was proud to have a photo taken together with my daughter. That was very special to me.*

### Amanda

*Having ownership over my own image was empowering. It gave me a sense of purpose and control. I liked the process a lot because it made me feel like I was in control of how I wanted myself to be portrayed; I decided when and where the photos were taken. This is very rare in life, especially when you are struggling. Taking part in *The Roles We Play* has changed the way I am perceived by people. At one point I used to be dismissed as a nobody. I was looked down upon, as though I was nothing. I don't feel that way now. I can go out and hold my head up. I get respect. They see me more as a human*

## Community Photoshoots

*being now; for the first time in years I have the confidence to stand up and be counted.*

### James

*I needed confidence to have my photo taken; I have a problem with my image, especially my face. I needed to develop the courage to have my photo out there where other people could see it. I wanted to support other people, so I had to do it myself. With Eva taking the photos, I got to know her first so it wasn't a problem, it was always a relaxed atmosphere. If it's someone that you don't know, [...] it always feels staged.*

### Eric

*To see yourself portrayed in a positive light definitely makes you feel much more worthwhile, much more part of society, much more useful.*

### Moraene

*It was quite powerful at the end, before things went to print, to be able to re-read what we'd written over time, to be able to think, "Is that the final thing that I want to say?" to think, "Is that what I want to leave in this book forever?" Once we'd done that, and it was chosen and it went into print, that is an amazing sensation, having your words next to your image; it validates you.*

The extended time frame between the start of the project and the publication of this book has enabled myself and the participants to get to know each other and build relationships of trust, allowing for more intimate and revealing representations to come through in the photographs. It has also allowed for an ongoing, evolving consideration of a person's sense of self so that individuals could be re-photographed if they felt the original photographs no longer represented them. This has allowed the participants to fully embrace the aim of the project and to rightfully claim ownership of it.

Adopting a transparent and collaborative methodology was very important to me. The collaborative methodology we used allowed for the subject to decide on where and how to be photographed, to be re-photographed if they choose so, to be involved in the editing process, and to complement the photos with extended captions (stories), all of which contributed to creating a portrait that fits with the subjects' self-presentation. This supported growth of participants' confidence and voicing their opinion publicly. I see this as a form of public rehearsal through which participants gather confidence to then speak in public. This grew through time and with every additional event.

### Eva Sajovic

Artist Photographer



Following the success of the official book launch, which included a full exhibition at a South London gallery of photos and texts taken from the book, the decision was made to tour this multimedia exhibition throughout the UK and Europe in 2015 and 2016

The **Tour and Exhibition** enabled the project to travel around the UK and engage with people from different backgrounds in activities that challenge attitudes towards poverty in the UK. The project stimulated constructive and inclusive public debate about the portrayal of people who experience poverty. Visiting over 35 venues across the UK, Ireland, Belgium and France, activities included creative workshops with community groups, collaborative work with performance artists, interactive stalls and installations at festivals, museums and galleries, and panel discussions in universities and conference spaces.

Project participants were directly involved in the formulation, preparation, delivery and evaluation of all activities as community ambassadors, workshop facilitators, performers and panellists, meeting people and sharing their experiences and expertise.

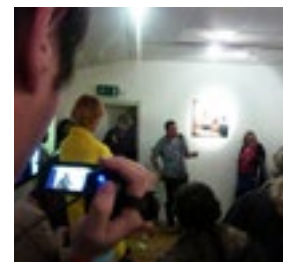
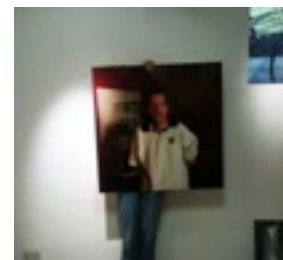
Accompanying the tour was the **Community Chalkboard**, a social media campaign developed to engage the viewers in the debate, by inviting participants to have their photo taken with a chalkboard upon which they had written the role they contribute to society. Over 300 members of the public got involved. Over 3000 copies of the book were also distributed to guests.

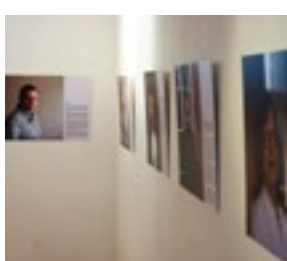
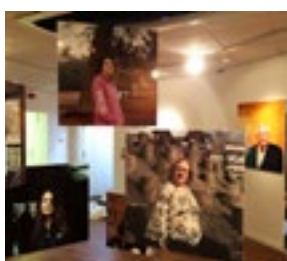
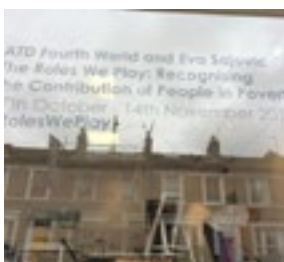
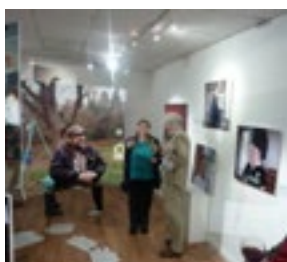
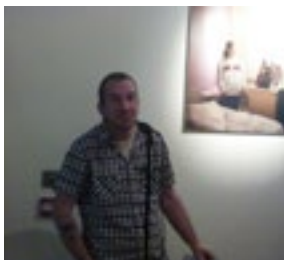
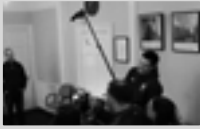
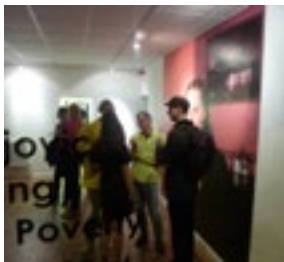
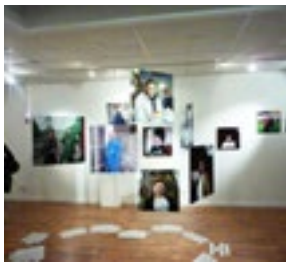
While various organisations work to empower individuals living in poverty, very few aim to bridge the gap of understanding between people locked into poverty and other members of society, or encourage public participation in actively re-constructing the debate about poverty. The most successful measures for engaging the public are those where people can meet each other and engage in genuine dialogue on poverty and society; people's attitudes to poverty can change quite dramatically when given more information about people's direct experiences of poverty.

In preparation for the first public launch, the team really pushed this artistic aspect of the project. The exhibition was indeed magnificent, with big beautiful portraits of the participants hanging in a beautiful gallery, films showing, texts printed out and displayed and many people who had come to see it. However, it became clear that the important thing was to engage in a dialogue with the public.

### Dann Kenningham

Project Coordination,  
ATD Fourth World





## The Tour & Exhibition

**An Audience with the Real Experts on Poverty** is a project inspired by *The Roles We Play*, led by individuals with an experience of long-term poverty, supported by ATD Fourth World.

The project aims to stimulate constructive and inclusive public debate about the portrayal of people who experience poverty, providing opportunities for people living in poverty to develop their capacity to speak out from direct personal experience and lead the debate as experts by experience.

The project creates public spaces where people in poverty lead the debate, contributing through first-hand experience, collective knowledge and expertise. Public workshops and panel discussions explore the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, fostering real open dialogue between people in poverty and the public, shedding light on misconceptions present in society today.

### Patricia

*We had events across the country in London, Brighton, Oxford, Sheffield, Southampton, Norwich, Bristol, Shipley, Glasgow, Dublin and Belfast. Getting the project out into the public eye was important because we had the chance to go to many different places — places where we would not normally visit. I never imagined having my portrait displayed in a museum or discussing our work in universities.*

### Moraene

*In discussions about how best to use this work and how to reach a wide public, it was decided by our group to take our work on the road. We started a process in which the participants would take the book and exhibition out to a variety of venues meeting the public face to face, in community centres, libraries, universities. After each viewing of the exhibition, people had many questions for the project participants. This led to a progression from a typical exhibition to an open engagement with the public that we decided to call “An Audience with the Real Experts on Poverty”.*

*These panel discussions led by us revealed to audiences our diverse experiences and expertise and our confidence to discuss the realities of being trapped in poverty, the causes, and potential solutions and ways to overcome it.*

### Moraene

*The feedback from these sessions has been very positive. After one session, a participant from the audience told me: “We need to have times like this in order to counter all the negative stereotypes that the Government and media feed us every day. This has given me a new perception of who are the people in poverty and how they struggle to have their contributions recognised.”*

*“My opinion of the key message is that people who have experienced poverty need to be included in any discussion to eradicate it.”*

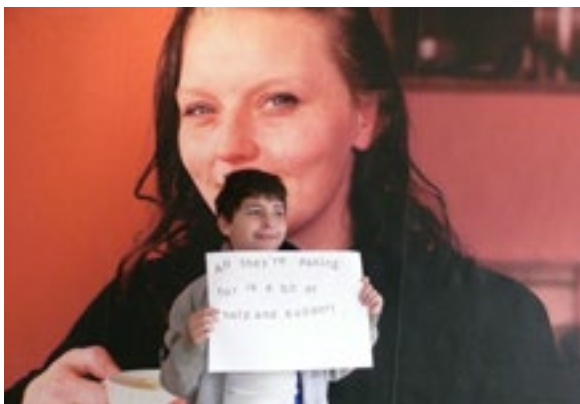
## Observations on Facilitation from the Public Workshops

In public facing workshops and conferences, when opportunity arises, the facilitators would ask a newer less experienced participant to pair up with a more experienced participant to co-facilitate together. This can help to create a space of peer support and mutual learning. This framework was always prepared together with the participants and supported throughout by the facilitator.

In public conversations and workshops, the project participants who were in the panel presenting were also ready to take part in the small working group discussions with the public. This helped to create a more relaxed and informal environment and gave the participants a chance to be more familiarised with the space and the public from the start of the event.

During the panel discussions, the facilitators practiced a friendly relaxed approach, often taking a more 'in the background' role, holding the space. This made it possible for the project participants to be at the centre of the event and genuinely lead the discussion. The facilitator then would gauge when gentle encouragement was appropriate as a support for the participants to go further in their thinking and reflections or for clarifying understanding with the public.

**Corrinna Bain**  
ATD Fourth World UK



## Public Perspective

During initial launches of *The Roles We Play* book and audio-visual material we asked people to provide us with feedback. Respondents demonstrated clear interest in further (and more inclusive and constructive) debate on the issue of poverty in the UK.

Viewers expressed feeling 'shaken up' and 'shocked' to see that poverty is still prevalent in the UK. One visitor said: "It is really important to realise that the stereotypical view of poverty and the cause of it is very different from the experiences of those in poverty. Keep up the good work – listening and bridging the perception to reality." We have also found that asking the public to identify the roles they play in their community through the **Community Chalkboard** is an effective equaliser with project participants. By encouraging viewers also to be participants, completing the same task originally undertaken by the participants, greater connection and empathy is forged.

**Dr Will Mason, Sociologist and  
Lecturer in Applied Social Science,  
The University of Sheffield**

*In The Roles We Play book, the medium that's used is particularly powerful and drew me to the work. This is the kind of book that you really want to keep and look after. It's a beautiful object. To see this subject matter presented in that way is one of the reasons that I was so struck by it. It's quite advanced [because] it's re-framing the way that poverty is perceived, presented, and understood in political discourse. It is re-framing poverty more positively, thinking about not deficit but about contribution.*

*“The exhibition is an eye opener; it's good to see so many people doing positive work in the community.”*

*I value in particular the way The Roles We Play work was constructed and the way it was co-produced in collaboration between the organisation, the photographer, and the subjects of the images. [They] had been through a process of negotiation about how the images were taken, which images were chosen, and how the biographies were written and displayed. This brought to life experiences of poverty, framed in a way that was empowering for the people involved.*

*It occurred to me that if I could benefit so much from this as a researcher, then my students who are studying sociology of the family could too. So I invited ATD Fourth World to come and present the work at the University of Sheffield. The students and The Roles We Play participants had the opportunity to speak together in small groups and have a dialogue about shared experiences, focusing on the question 'What does poverty mean to you?' This gave students the opportunity to start to question some of their preconceptions and assumptions about experiences of poverty. The Roles We Play work humanises poverty as an issue and puts a human face on what can be fairly abstract, such as research evidence, concepts, and data.*

*The students really enjoyed the session. Many of them have not had much direct experience of poverty. I'm not sure they would have understood how difficult it might have been for some of the speakers to stand and share some of those personal, lived experiences... [But] the students said it was inspiring [and] an eye opener. If your eyes are open, then you've come to see something differently. Nothing damages prejudice like actually meeting people, sitting down, and getting to know them. The Roles We Play presentation and conversations helped the students to see poverty and understand it through a different lens.*



## Comments from students from The University of Sheffield

*"This is an excellent exhibition and I wish more people can see it and understand what poverty really means to ordinary people."*

*"The session with ATD Fourth World was incredibly insightful for me. When we usually look at poverty in everyday life many of us just think of numbers, and we probably don't think about how these numbers are just ordinary people like ourselves."*

*"What stood out to me the most within the session was how these people have to continuously repeat their situation to get any form of help. Afterwards, it hit home how very real and common poverty is within such a 'rich' country like the UK. I would love to take time to help the people who are struggling, even if it is to just say 'Hello, how are you today?'"*

*"Having talked about concepts like social exclusion and poverty beforehand, it was refreshing and important to talk to people who actually have experience of these things. It made me more aware of the people who are affected, and the variety of people who are affected."*

*"I've thought before about the abstract issue; I'm trying now to consider poverty from their perspective. Also, these people aren't just 'poor souls' in need. They do important things for others that keep things working."*



*"I was a bit scared at first, I was a bit nervous, I didn't know what to expect, but I thought: "You know what? It's good to be involved in it," and it was something different totally to what I had ever done before."*

**Angela**



Comments from a workshop with  
the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Claire Ainsley, Executive Director,  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

*"I was struck by how strongly people spoke about the importance of owning their image and the impact of having limited input into how they are written about and how disempowering an experience this is. This workshop made me think much more about participation and the difference it makes allowing the space and time for people to have full ownership and to shine so brightly through doing so. The evidence of the impact that this approach can bring about was in the room."*

*"Listening to the group from ATD Fourth World reminded me how fundamental this type of work is... not just because 'it's a nice thing to do', but to enable the conditions that can help bring about social change at all levels of society."*

*"I have worked alongside people with lived experience for over thirteen years; yet I never fail to learn something new or deepen my understanding of poverty when I take the time to sit and really listen. This learning session run by the participants with lived experience of poverty from ATD Fourth World was no exception."*

*The Roles We Play project had a really positive impact in influencing how we work alongside people with lived experience. Over the course of the project, we got to meet participants, who had real voice and control of the project rather than being subjects. We then worked with ATD Fourth World to use the images in our materials at the political party conferences, and make films of the participants in conversation. We have also taken the learning and adapted it into the way we work today. People with lived experience of poverty have to be at the heart of collective approaches to change, and this project has been an important part of that story.*

*(From a workshop led by project participants at the Joseph Rowntree Homestead York 2018)*

*"Great initiative, amazing exhibition. Made me understand some aspects of poverty I haven't thought of before."*



## The Tour and Exhibition

### James

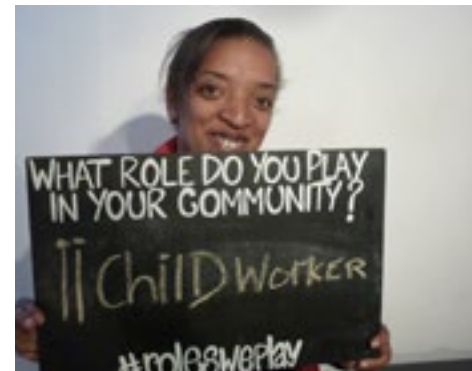
*The community chalkboard was a great way to engage the public in these conversations and became a big hit on Facebook. It helped us approach the viewer and start to discuss the project.*

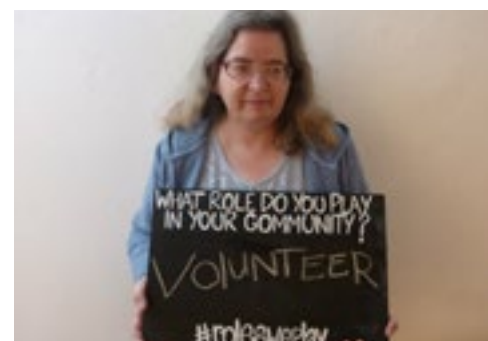
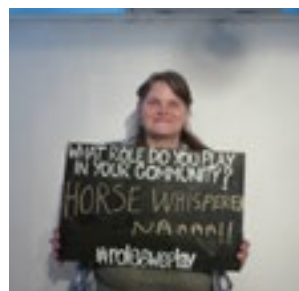
### Thomas

*Taking The Roles We Play out on the road was important to me because a lot of people on benefits or on low incomes are judged for it. Our public conversations challenged this. It's a way for me to say: "Yes, I am on benefits but don't judge me before you get to know me. Get to know the person first before you make any decisions or judgements."*

### Seamus

*I gained a lot of knowledge and strength through this project. I gained an awareness of the problems in the world and the courage to stand up and do something about them. At one exhibition, I talked to a local school teacher and she was impressed with the book. She asked me to sign a copy. She told me that she would take the book to her school and show it to the students.*





*"This project gave us the chance to meet new people who we would not have met otherwise; and change their views on people living in poverty. This project helped me not to be ashamed about living in poverty."*

**Tammy**



### Eric

*The difference between the early exhibitions and later the tour, I would say, is the exhibition was much more static: pictures on walls and people wandering around, whereas the tour and panel discussions were more face-to-face talking with people... We have a lot of lived experience in the group, years of living in poverty... years of making ends meet... years of bringing up our children well... years of resisting and struggling through... We have a lot to be proud about and to stand up and speak about. Yeah, we are experts! And the tour brought that into the spotlight.*

### Kathy

*Taking time to evaluate this work together has really helped me think about the direction of the project. By looking back and evaluating the past events as a group and hearing the others' points of view, this has made me think how I can better manage and prepare myself for future events. Last time I took part in an event in Oxford, I spoke mainly about general poverty issues, but now I can speak more about the project, how it started and other people's stories and subjects.*

### Thomas

*This project over time helped me realise that, yes, I might be in poverty, but I don't need to be ashamed about it. The public events showed us that we have experience and expertise that is often overlooked;*

*but when we have the chance to sit and talk to people from the Government or media we realise that we can move forward together and build positive relationships. We have ideas about how to make things better for everyone.*

### Moraene

*It's very important that people who live in poverty are given opportunities to show the best of themselves, what they can do, and what they can contribute. When people are given opportunities to show the best of themselves, they grow and they are able to demonstrate what skills they have. When they're given an opportunity to gain more skills, then they accept it and it gives them a kind of dignity that they wouldn't have otherwise had.*

### Thomas

*We presented our work based on real life experience of poverty to around sixty students at the University of Sheffield in a lecture room setting. It was important that we spoke directly to the students; it felt to me like a real achievement as we were given the chance to interact with students who in later life might end up being the policymakers. If we can teach the students now that people in poverty are not just facts and figures on a report, but everyday people.*

### Eric

*It was very important for the group that different universities recognised our work officially: our body of work created and developed by us, people with an experience of poverty as part of a university course. Poverty should be on the national curriculum and everyone should know a little bit about it because it is never going to be completely eradicated if people don't understand it.*

### Tammy

*Who could have imagined that a book, an exhibition, and a multimedia project that was conceived to tackle the prejudices those in poverty experience would also become a digital social media campaign, workshops, panel discussions, and a whole host of other events? Public reception to The Roles We Play has been overwhelmingly positive.*

### Moraene

*The workshop with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was very important. It gave project participants an opportunity to meet people who work behind the scenes to fight poverty, often without direct contact with people who experience poverty. It was an opportunity to help them to learn more about what poverty means to those who live it. It gave us an opportunity to give poverty a face and a voice, to build with others the fight to end poverty. We cannot do it without them and they cannot do it without us. Experts working together.*

# Impressions of the Tour and Exhibition by Project Hosts

Jaqueline Frazer,  
Belfast Health Development Unit:

*The event at the Ulster Hall Belfast re-inforced for me how important it is that those who develop policy listen to the real experts, understand the barriers that people face day-in, day-out and work to remove those barriers. (Belfast Council event 2016)*

Robert Walker,  
Professor Emeritus and Emeritus  
Fellow GTC; and Professor of Social  
Development, Beijing Normal University:

*As a civil servant and then as an academic I have spent my life studying issues to do with poverty and have interviewed many hundreds of people that society considers poor. However, it is only in the last couple of years, working with ATD Fourth World, that I have come to know people in poverty who I am now proud to be able to call my friends.*

*I think this project is both an invitation and a celebration. Each of these photographs invites you to know more about the person and the roles that they play, and that's a real contribution that's being made here; it's common humanity. I think the celebration is about a celebration of lives and the achievements that those lives have generated.*

*(From an oral presentation at the Ashmolean Museum Oxford 2016)*

Fran Bennett,  
Senior Research Fellow, Department of  
Social Policy and Intervention,  
University of Oxford:

*I think The Roles We Play is one of the most important pieces of creative works about poverty in recent years... ATD Fourth World has always emphasised the importance of respect for people living in poverty; how seriously people living in poverty take their responsibilities; the impact of poverty on their ability to fulfil these; and poverty as a denial of human rights - all of which are crucial contributions to efforts to change the context. It has now added to these another key contribution - highlighting the roles that people living in poverty play in their own words and with their own images.*

*The context I think is one in which people in poverty have been traditionally defined in terms of what they lack, so that's sometimes called in the academic phrase a 'deficit model' of people in poverty. Often that's not just lacking money or material resources, also it is being treated as though they are lacking the ability to care for their children, abilities to do a job properly... especially I think being treated in terms of lacking in their willingness and abilities to make a contribution towards their society.*

*(From an oral presentation at the project launch Gallery South London 2015)*

Timothy Ashplant,  
Visiting Professor, King's College London:

*Sadly, there is a long history of societies belittling and denigrating people who live in poverty, aiming to separate 'workers from shirkers, strivers from skivers'. These hostile efforts have always been challenged, both by sympathetic outsiders who collected and published testimonies, and by those living in poverty themselves when they had the resources and opportunity to speak and write about their lives.*

*The Roles We Play has provided a safe space where, working with professionals who share their range of skills, its authors have gained the confidence and competence to tell their own stories, to describe the roles they play in their communities, to portray themselves as they wish to be seen, to have ownership of their stories. Their courage and articulacy, and the vivid stories they tell – in print, in image, in video, in speech – help to advance the ever-necessary project of 'speaking truth to power'. Two of their statements stand out for me: "it went into print - that is an amazing sensation, having your words next to your image, it validates you"; "without writing, the history of people in poverty is lost".*

*(From a presentation at King's College London 2016)*

*"The media often make us seem so different, so much less than others, this gives us the chance to show that we are just normal people trapped in abnormal circumstances that we did not create."*

**Bea**



Dr Orna Shemer, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute:

*I facilitated a research seminar with the aim of supporting the participants and facilitators to recognise areas of learning achieved through The Roles We Play project.*

*The process was created out of personal pain that was transformed into a critical reflection on (and protest against) predominant perceptions about people living in poverty and their contribution to society. The process was created through research and action, a process of praxis, in which the participants acted in the learning and research areas of the group. These processes enabled participants to share their feelings, tell their personal stories, and express opinions. In a dedicated process of documentation and reading of materials, the participants distilled the main messages, creating authentic products of knowledge, without interpretations.*

*These materials have been translated into action that has emerged from the process, with a critical message – in a book, exhibitions, panel discussions, university presentations and more. Reflecting on personal growth was a new, demanding and powerful means of creating positive self-perception in the group. The basis for this was asking participants to think about what had changed for them by taking part in the project.*

The Methodology was characterised by several characteristics:

**Deep partnership** within the group of participants and facilitators and other stakeholders who joined at different stages of the process.

**An authentic and critical dialogue** - an invitation to discourse, observation through narratives and sharing.

**Personal accompaniment** - each of the participants is noticeable and visible. The facilitators accompany them and stand by them when necessary.

**Working on the cohesive nature** of the group in many ways, direct and indirect.

**Working in ways of peace** - criticism was passed on by gentle methods in the group based on trust.

**Even harsh messages were expressed** in a way that allows the participants to be examined and discussed. The personal message, the subjective story, has power from within.

**Freedom of action** - the process was subordinate to its partners and not to the commitment of researchers, consultants, or external donors who might impose traditional methods of inquiry and action.

**Distribution in relevant spaces** to change consciousness - The messages are being passed on to students, researchers, professionals and even policy makers. They are also passed on to the general public as part of a broader change of consciousness.

There are few such wide-reaching community studies and processes in which the participants who live in poverty are so dominant and influential, and where their voice is preserved so authentically.

*"The thing about The Roles We Play is that it says everybody should be treated with dignity and everyone should have respect for each other. I believe that we've got to practice it, not just say it and put it down on paper."*

**Derek**



## Since 2016, *The Roles We Play* continues to highlight the voices of those living in poverty and build a meaningful dialogue around genuine participation

### Moraene

*Full participation is more than just turning up; it means being involved as an equal partner at every stage from inception to conclusion. To be in control of the texts, the images and the concept behind it all means this project is ours and not just an attempt to shape us to meet someone else's expectations. We own it and we are proud of it.*

*From the beginning, because of the origin of the project, I felt that as participants we had an ownership of this project. And if someone had taken away our texts and said, "we've amended it," "we've corrected it," "we've made it—you know, smarter;" or taken away the photographs and said, "well, we've looked through them and these are the images of you that we think are the best, and they are the ones we're gonna use," I think I'd have been quite angry. I'd have felt it was a bit of a betrayal of what the whole project was about.*

### James

*Number one, it's confidence; and number two is belief in yourself; and number three is that you do matter. This proves that you matter to someone. You've been given the opportunity to do something like this, people value your opinion and if people value your opinion and you do matter; you will constantly grow and evolve.*

### Kathy

*The idea that this project is a celebration of who we are, that really helped me... That*

*definition, celebrating who we are and all our different identities, is really, really important because it can cut through a lot of social barriers. I think we should just switch off from the media and the politics and be proud of who we are, no matter what financial, social, economic situation that we're in, and learn from one another, about each other's cultures, crafts, identities and just to enjoy life.*

### Angela

*The reason why I wanted to be involved in the project at the beginning was so it could give me confidence to speak in front of people. I had seen James speak in Parliament, and I thought, if he can do that... so can I, I could speak in public; I could speak in front of a whole load of people, which I have never done before. Since then a few years ago now, I have spoken in Parliament also, I'm a lot more confident and I've found my voice. I'm capable of doing a lot more things than what I could have done a couple of years ago. It just gave me confidence to speak more. I can do this now. I'm proud of myself, actually.*

### James

*I have a lot more confidence around people, to talk to and talk on camera. I feel like I can engage in even trivial conversations. So I feel more willing to talk, more able to do so. I'm proud of the finished product, yeah. I've learnt that "Your opinions matter". I learnt that you do grow and evolve... Seven years ago at the start of the project I was very different.*

### Moraene

*True and meaningful participation of people living in poverty is not a consultative action; it is a process of empowerment through meeting, discussion, reflection, and preparation. It involves not just living and testifying about the reality of poverty but understanding and analysing the causes and effects of poverty. Without this their "participation" is tokenistic. The Roles We Play project took time to meet these requirements and to develop into a public project in which the participants have true ownership. The participants gained confidence, new skills, pride in their achievements and courage to speak out.*


*Ending poverty begins with a public and political will to do so, this cannot be achieved in a divided and disengaged society. Social change requires unity and common purpose to build political will to invest in poverty eradication. The Roles We Play brings together people living in poverty and others in a positive and inspiring way.*

*Social change is a change to society, by the people in that society. We are all the people and together we can build a society that ends the injustice of poverty and recognises the intrinsic value of each person's life and contribution.*

*"I'm more confident now in what I'm doing and how I speak to people. People in poverty are just as valuable to society as those with jobs and money, and the film shows that."*

**Paul**





*"To see yourself portrayed in a positive light definitely makes you feel much more worthwhile, much more part of society, much more useful."*

**Eric**



## Creating Ownership

### Amanda

*In the beginning I was a bit wary, a bit afraid of whether the nerves would get the better of me. Because the thought of standing up and speaking in front of a crowd, at that point quite terrified me... At that point, life wasn't too good... different family issues that I won't like to say too much about, but things were going from bad to worse. With the help of ATD Fourth World I found my feet and I was able to get back on track.*

### Eric

*Being involved in this project has actually helped to rebuild my confidence, because, back when I was in the army, I was used to speaking in public and talking, but after leaving the army and ending up on the benefit system, I lost so much self-esteem and I was actually scared to talk to people in public, but now I feel comfortable going out and talking to almost anybody.*

### Tammy

*This project gave us the chance to meet new people who we would not have met otherwise and change their views on people living in poverty. This project helped me not to be ashamed about living in poverty.*

### Eric

*My opinion of the key message is that people who have experienced poverty need to be included in any discussion to eradicate it.*

This work was collaborative in the proper sense of the word, co-produced with the people who were in the project from the start. The time devoted to build relationships with the community was crucial. This allowed ultimately people in the book to take ownership of it, instead of being driven by obligations and commitments to the funders, like in so many other projects. It was very important to end up with pictures which represent people the right way, the way they want to be represented. Ongoing discussions with the participants were instrumental in the development of the concept as well as the content. As an artist working predominantly in participatory practice, I often contemplate the roles being played in such a collaboration; my own role and those of the other participants actively engaged in the creative process. I am interested in the interdependence and interconnectedness of such a process, the value we all bring and also the nature of the work and how it confers different positions on us all.

The project was not only conceived together with everybody, it was shaped together. I was behind the camera, but we decided together how people wanted to present themselves. The collaborative aspect comes from the production and continues through the dissemination: people finding new ways and forms of making known this work.

### Eva Sajovic

Artist Photographer

*"All I can think of is that we all should help each other. If everybody helps each other, that's the only way poverty can end; everybody's got to get together and work together."*

**Georgina**



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*The Roles We Play: A Model of Genuine Participation* film available:  
[atd-uk.org/2018/10/04/the-roles-we-play-a-model-of-genuine-participation](http://atd-uk.org/2018/10/04/the-roles-we-play-a-model-of-genuine-participation)

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*"Listening to others in the group is so important, sharing what people have been through in their lives. People have been through a lot and sharing is important for everyone."*

**Patricia**



**F**ind a working pace that enables all members of the group to participate

**A**cknowledge that all members of the group will understand the work and engage differently

**C**reate the best condition for participation possible, comfort, refreshments and breaks are important

**I**dentify and acknowledge the diverse talents and skills in the group and bring them in where possible

**L**isten actively and check in with the group often, don't be afraid to positively push the group when the time is right

**I**nclude the thinking of the group in the planning from the beginning of the process/project where possible

**T**ime is key: take the time needed to allow everyone's involvement and take a break when the group begins to lose concentration

**A**llow space for individual reflection, small group work before wider group discussion to enable everyone's involvement

**T**rust is essential; building trust within the group and with the facilitators. Support participants to recognise their own capacity

**I**nvest in planning, preparation and evaluation regularly. Keep participants in the loop and updated between meetings or if a participant could not attend

**O**wnership is fundamental, aim to develop a sense of shared ownership in the work

**N**ote and share openly the progress made with the group, be ambitious, celebrate achievement

**G**ood energy is important, the workload can be serious but laughter and good humour can help

**U**nderstanding is key, find diverse ways to check if the group is understanding the work

**I**ntroduce different ways of thinking through various group exercises and actions

**D**iversify your facilitation techniques and surrounding, observe the group dynamics and allow changes to the programme when needed

**E**mpathy and belief in the group's capacity for success is key, recognise and build on the strengths in the group



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ATD Fourth World is a registered charity  
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