

“CAMPUS” AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF LIBERATION



“Campus” is a meeting held every year attended by researchers, practitioners, ATD Volunteer Corps members, and people who have had experience with poverty. Participants will discuss how people in poverty are separated out for unequal treatment, and how society can address this unfairness.

Understanding Humanity in the Context of Extreme Poverty

Our next Campus will take place in Pierrelaye from 22-26 August 2016. In preparation for 2017, the centenary of Joseph Wresinski’s birth, this forum will look at the human condition from the perspective of his work and his ideas, as well as the perspective of people who have lived in extreme poverty.

These five days will be an opportunity to “live together in order to think together” and to engage in a conversation about what it means to be human. Individuals live in a context of different relationships. Our family and the community we feel a part of are particularly

important to who we are as human beings. The strength of these ties can help us realize that an essential element of personal liberty is knowing that those you are close to and identify with are free from injustice, discrimination and oppression.

We invite researchers and practitioners, new ATD volunteers in training, and students working on their theses to explore what it means today to be facing unbearable poverty. Such poverty can deeply dehumanize us: not only the men, women and children who endure it, but also those who tolerate it, or even contribute to it.

Working every day amidst appalling deprivation, Joseph Wresinski saw that deep down people were never resigned to living in poverty. Nor did they accept that anyone else should live that way. The memorial he inspired on the Paris Trocadero Plaza states this clearly: "Poverty does not have to exist". On the contrary, those who suffer such poverty can show us that, as Wresinski put it, "The time has come to put humanity first".

Wresinski's thinking suggests an "anthropology of liberation", a perspective on the many ways that all people can find personal freedom. We must continually try to recognize and rise above the things that limit us by threatening to dehumanize us and cut us off from other people. When we see people struggling to survive in terrible poverty, how are we inspired to oppose such conditions? How can we overcome the distrust between groups that causes some people to be pushed aside and ignored?

Joseph Wresinski showed us a way to live with the tensions and the contradictions that we all carry within us. Someone hard to recognize as a human being, or someone who feels not recognizable as a human being, can also be a person who, despite everything, still has hope. The person who seems to accept poverty, to be in compliance with it, can also be one who deeply opposes it. But how can our feelings of hope and opposition become actions that accomplish something?

As we work together to contend with the things that dehumanize us, everyone's ideas are important, but primarily those of people who experience a sweeping exclusion from society. We will look at the question of how to start from their ideas and, harnessing the energy and good will of everyone, build a society that welcomes everybody. We must find a way to end the incredible waste of unappreciated intelligence possessed by people in poverty. In their keen perceptiveness is a wealth of creativity used to confront, and often prevail over, situations that can be both desperate and crushing.



Place: ATD Fourth World International Centre, 12 rue Pasteur, 95480, Pierrelaye France
Dates: 22-26 August 2016

To register, or for more information, contact Alexis Testau at etudes.recherche@atd-quartmonde.org.

This forum is open to members of ATD Fourth World and other researchers and practitioners. We are in the process of putting together for participants a collection of relevant writings by Joseph Wresinski. If you would like to share something he wrote on the theme of this year's Campus that is particularly meaningful for you, please send it to us or provide a reference to the book, article, etc. where it may be found.

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[← Previous](#)

[Next →](#)
