

## Text of the General Assembly of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, 2004

All human beings, regardless of their place in society, are equal in dignity, which must be respected, not violated by anyone for any reason. Equal dignity is the basis for fundamental rights especially the right to freedom of expression, to live as a family, to housing, to health care, and to work. Those who live in extreme poverty are the first victims of the violation of human rights. Keenly aware of the world's long history of human suffering and hope, Father Joseph Wresinski, born in extreme poverty himself, founded the International Movement ATD Fourth World in 1957 with families from the homeless camp of Noisy-le-Grand (France) and others who joined them. His belief that "Every person is a chance for humanity" is a source of inspiration for many people all over the world. Injustice, powerlessness, shame, humiliation, and exclusion as experienced by those living in extreme poverty must not be tolerated. Our priority is to reach out to the poorest and most ignored people, be alongside them, and create links with them and between them. Ensuring that those with the hardest life are at the heart of all projects and listening to the dreams and aspirations they have for themselves and their children, we can reach a mutual understanding. When the most excluded people can contribute their knowledge and experience to society as equals, extreme poverty will be overcome.

ATD Fourth World welcomes everyone. It unites people whatever their origin, social status, culture or beliefs to fight against poverty. In building trust, solidarity and friendship, all have a place to realize their full and best potential. Working together and learning from each other, everyone is free to express themselves without being judged. The Movement develops partnerships at all levels of society.

It was founded with the conviction that people have created the conditions for extreme poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, a long-term commitment is needed to ensure that no one is left behind. Embracing such a responsibility is a source of pride for everyone. As long as the power of money is the primary value, the world will be menaced by poverty and violence. If humanity is our primary value, the world will be transformed and we can all enjoy peace. October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, inaugurated by ATD Fourth World in 1987 and recognized by the United Nations since 1992, annually presents this on-going challenge:

*"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, Human Rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty."*  
Father Joseph Wresinski