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PRESS RELEASE: New Book “Not Meant to Live Like This: Weathering the Storm of Our Lives in New Orleans”

By 50 co-authors from New Orleans

Publication date: 26 August 2012

Priced at \$31.95 Paperback ISBN 978-0-934-199-00-1

Many books have been written about Hurricane Katrina, but how many have been written by people living in poverty?

“**Not Meant to Live Like This**” is a humble and moving collection of testimonies from 50 co-authors about their lives in New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina. First-hand accounts that lay bare the realities and challenges of living in persistent poverty in New Orleans. These authentic voices tell us what happened to some of those folks who lost everything and were dispersed across the southern United States.

The ATD (All Together in Dignity) Fourth World Movement, the US branch of the **International Movement ATD Fourth World**, is a network of people in poverty and those from other backgrounds, dedicated to ending persistent poverty and exclusion. The Fourth World Movement’s presence in New Orleans gave its members a unique window into the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Those families who had survived for years under the weight of persistent poverty were generally the last to be evacuated and many have not returned to the city.

In the months following Hurricane Katrina, ATD Fourth World Movement Volunteer Corps members traveled across the southern United States to reconnect with displaced families. While visiting a family in Arkansas, these volunteers were given the idea for creating a book. As the volunteers continued to trace displaced families, they began recording their testimonies, which lead to the production of “**Not Meant to Live Like This: Weathering the Storm of Our Lives in New Orleans**”. Through candid personal accounts, key themes of health, housing, education and violence emerge. This book adds a unique perspective and rich texture to research within the field of social sciences.

In his foreword, William Julius Wilson, Professor of Sociology at Harvard University writes: “I strongly suggest that concerned citizens read “**Not Meant to Live Like This**.”” Author Jonathon Kozol describes it a “powerful book—and one of the only books about Katrina told in the voices of its victims.” Professor Bill Quigley of Loyola University, New Orleans, states “these are the struggles and joys of life among those left behind when Katrina hit. Don’t miss this book”. Chester Hartman, Director of Research, Poverty & Race Research Action Council suggests that “reliance on the direct reporting of those living in poverty gives the book a credibility and comprehensiveness that academic studies often lack.”

A **launch** party featuring many of the co-authors (with live Jazz and New Orleans hospitality!) will be held at the McKenna Museum in New Orleans on **Sunday 26th August 2012** (5pm-7pm), 2003 Carondelet Street, New Orleans LA 70130. “**Not Meant to Live Like This**” has been designed to act as a launch pad for continuing discussions, workshops and community organizing events. Following the launch in New Orleans on August 26th, the book tour is travelling throughout the South where families were displaced. To request images and a review copy or to discuss features and interviews, please contact:

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Website: www.atd-fourthworld.org/Not-meant-to-live-like-this,2990

Twitter: @FwmNola Facebook: www.facebook.com/fwm.nola



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Background

This book is a moving collection of narratives from 50 co-authors about New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina. In the months following the levees breaching, ATD Fourth World Movement volunteers traveled the southern states to reconnect with displaced ATD members from New Orleans. While visiting the Collins family in Arkansas, volunteers Maria Victoire and Corinna Bain were given the idea for the book by Eula Collins. As ATD volunteers continued reconnecting with displaced members, they began recording their stories.

Through a truly collaborative writing process, this collection of personal testimonies ultimately developed into the book “Not Meant To Live Like This: Weathering the Storm of Our Lives in New Orleans.” Most co-authors were born and raised in poverty in the 7th Ward, Central City and Irish Channel neighborhoods and many are still displaced. Their personal testimonies give voice to those who have not otherwise been asked to tell their stories, exposing the realities and challenges of persistent poverty.

Through this book tour project, we aim to unite the authentic voices of those living in poverty with academic research on poverty eradication. The book features contributions from ATD full time volunteers, social scientists, and academics—including a foreword by Harvard Professor William Julius Wilson. “Not Meant To Live Like This” adds a unique perspective and rich texture to research within the field of social sciences.

Co-authors

ATD Members: Corinna Bain, Jean-Claude Caillaux, Maryvonne Caillaux and Catherine Divers (ATD, France), Brother Don Everard (Hope House, New Orleans), Ingrid Hutter (ATD, Holland), Sister Jane McKinlay (Sacred Heart, New Orleans), Anne Monnet (France), Bob Mauss, Dierdre Mauss (New Orleans), Professor Bill Quigley (Loyola), and Father Winus Roeten (Retired, New Orleans), Maria Sandvik, Gwen Smalley, and *Maria Victoire** (ATD, New Orleans)

ATD Members with live experiences of poverty in New Orleans:

Brittany Collins, Thomas “Long Boy” Davis, *Patricia Denson**, Shantell Denson, Amanda Graham, Della Johnson, Natasha Johnson, *Sylvia Miller**, Glonice Paschall, Pauline Payne, Webster Rainey, Albert Randall, *Barbara Risin**, Charmaine Russell, Germaine Russell, Stacey Smith, Bobbie Vickers, and Raquel Williams

ATD Members still displaced: Destiny Argus, Marie Argus (Athens, GA), Jessica Bashful, Tiny Bashful (Texarkana, AR), Johntrell Clay (Atlanta, GA), Monica Clay (Phoenix, AZ), Eula Collins (Austin, TX), Kenneth Collins (Cynthiana, KY), Michelle Collins (Austin, TX), Mary Dawson (Bassfield, MS), James Doptimore (Tucson, AZ), Edward Lewis (Athens, GA), Marcie Lewis (Baton Rouge, LA), George J. Paschall (Tucson, AZ), *Ronald Schexnayder** (Hattiesburg, MS), Creighton Williams (Bassfield, MS), and Nette Williams (Ferriday, LA)

Co-authors who are no longer with us: James “Uncle Dog” Collins, Davis Darnis, Emelda Johnson, Audrey Shields, and John Vickers.

**available for interview; biographies included in this press kit*



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Launch and Tour

The book launch is being held at the beautiful McKenna Museum (2003 Carondelet St, New Orleans, LA 70130) on **Sunday, 26th August 2012, 5pm to 7.30pm**.

This FREE event will include: an introduction by Professor Bill Quigley, talks lead by co-authors, live music with ‘Some Like It Hot’ jazz band and ‘St Augustine Soulful Voices Choir’, an interactive performance by NOLA Playback Theatre, activities for children, refreshments, a photography exhibition, and a chance to meet the inspirational co-authors for a book signing.

There will also be a number of smaller book signings and events around New Orleans. These include:

- Wednesday, 29th Aug (5-7pm), Community Book Center, 2523 Bayou Road, LA 70119
- Sunday, 2nd Sept (3-5pm), Fair Grinds Coffeehouse, 3133 Ponce De Leon St, LA 70119
- Friday, 7th Sept (5-7pm), Ashe Cultural Arts Centre, 1712 Oretha C Haley Blvd, LA 70113
- Saturday, 8th Sept (6-8pm), Hope House, 916 Saint Andrew St., LA 70130
- Saturday, 15th Sept (3-5pm), Maple Street Book Shop, Healing Center, 2372 St Claude Avenue, LA 70117

The ‘Not Meant to Live Like This’ book tour will then leave New Orleans and travel throughout the South where families were displaced. The tour will include locations in Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi, Arizona and Kentucky for a year. First stop:

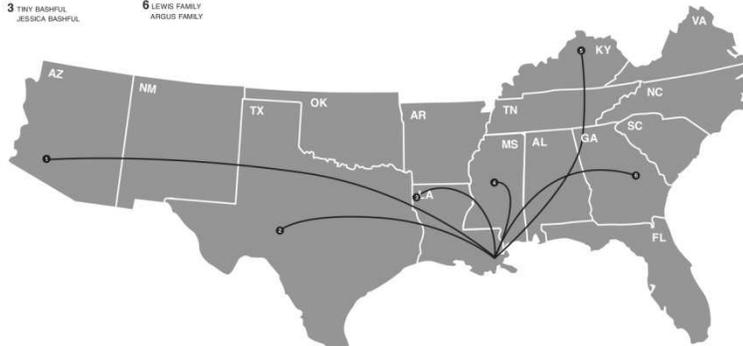
- Wednesday 26 September (11:00am – 12:45pm), Katrina Research Centre, University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast, 730 East Beach Boulevard, Long Beach, MS 39560

If you are interested in hosting a book signing or community organizing event in your local area, then please contact us. Further tour dates will be updated here:

<http://www.atd-quartmonde.org/Book-Launch.html>

DISPLACED FAMILIES

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 BARBARA RISIN
THOMAS DAVIS
GEORGE PASCHALL
JAMES DOPTIMORE | 4 DAWSON FAMILY
SCHENKMEYER FAMILY |
| 2 EULA COLLINS
GRAHAM FAMILY | 5 KENNETH COLLINS |
| 3 TINY BASHFUL
JESSICA BASHFUL | 6 LEWIS FAMILY
ARGUS FAMILY |





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Quotes

“This is a remarkable book by, and about, poor people in New Orleans as they underwent the devastation of Katrina after having undergone the prior devastation of a life in miserable poverty. Still more disturbing is the story of the aftermath when government officials destroyed the neighborhoods in which they had lived in order to build high-rent buildings for the privileged. Thus it was that a natural disaster was followed by a second disaster imposed upon the powerless by those who had always shunned and disrespected them. A powerful book—and one of the only books about Katrina told in the voices of its victims.”

- Jonathan Kozol, Author, Educator

“This book is based on 50 oral history interviews of people displaced by hurricane Katrina. It lifts up the voices of poor and working people of New Orleans. From the porches, churches, schools, laundromats, barbershops and nail shops the stories of school, survival, housing and violence emerge. The stories are as beautiful and unique as Mardi Gras floats. These are the struggles and joys of life among those left behind when Katrina hit. Don't miss this book.”

- Professor Bill Quigley, Loyola University

“A terrific guide to the persistence of global poverty through the lens and experience of Hurricane Katrina. Reliance on the direct reporting of those living in poverty gives the book a credibility and comprehensiveness that academic studies often lack.”

- Chester Hartman, Director of Research, Poverty & Race Research Action Council

*“If the larger society is to understand adequately the experiences and social outcomes of poor inner-city residents, they not only have to become aware of how racial forces directly contribute to inequality and persistent poverty, they also have to comprehend the role of political actions and impersonal economic forces that indirectly affect life in the inner city, as well as the effects of cultural constraints that have emerged from years of racial isolation and chronic economic subordination. To begin this process of education, I strongly suggest that concerned citizens read *Not Meant to Live Like This: Weathering the Storm of Our Lives in New Orleans*.”*

- From the foreword by Professor William Julius Wilson, Harvard

“Our book is to let the world know about our struggles, our suffering and the strength we need to raise our families and to live decently with the little bit we have. Our book will be a testimony to our lives, so that the world will never forget what we have been through and what we are still going through.”

- Sylvia Miller, co-author

“They said mandatory evacuation. Some people were stubborn. Some people died that way. We were one of the people who couldn't leave, because it was hard for us to find transportation.”

- Jontrell Clay, co-author

“It will take us more than ten years to bring our lives back to normal. We lost part of our family. We lost our houses. We lost our neighborhoods. Right now, we need two jobs to make a living, to pay the light bills, to pay the rent and to raise our family.”

- Pat Denson, co-author

“The reason why everybody stayed together during Katrina was because we knew each other. There was love and hope in the neighborhood. There was a little violence and misunderstanding, but the key thing was just knowing each other and being there for each other.”

- George Paschall, co-author



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“There is so much negative talk about New Orleans and they talk mostly about the killings and the violence. We need to talk more about how education could be better for our children.”

- Marcie Lewis, co-author

“It was difficult not having what you needed. But you had to learn how to survive with what you had. Me, I’m just a person who feels like this: something you don’t have, you can’t never miss. And you have to learn how to adjust and get by, and make it with what you have, and just be strong, and maybe the next day it will be better”

- Eula Collins, co-author

“They started locking us in our jail cells. They locked us in, and they locked all the doors, and they told us that we wasn’t gonna eat. Inmates started getting crazy. Fires started getting set... They didn’t basically say that they didn’t care about us, but they showed it to us: they left us...They’d locked us in our cells for days—without food, without water, without nothing.”

- Cootis, co-author

“In rebuilding the city of New Orleans, the people that make decisions haven’t thought about the poor people. The majority of the schools are not opened and rent has become very high. Some people’s lives are worse, because they used to live in the housing projects and now those are torn down. All is gone. Our neighborhoods are gone. It’s difficult to start over. It’s hard for poor people to speak up.”

- Stacey Smith, co-author

“I hope my family can move up in the world. My grandchild is going to be a nurse. I’m so proud of that. One is going to be a doctor. One is going to be a teacher. [...] My wish is that they achieve their goal, and then they be able to reach out to help other poor people and bring them up too.”

- Barbara Risin, co-author

“Many people had never lived any place else, had never been more than a few blocks from where they were born. When they left the city and became displaced, they lost overnight the network of safety and security they had woven together and shared in neighborhoods that were otherwise unsafe.”

- Maria Victoire, ATD Fourth World full time volunteer

“You would never know the struggles that people living in poverty go through month after month. [...] They don’t beat their chest and complain, they just do what they have to do. What kind of courage is that? They are the most courageous people I know.”

- Gwen Smalley, ATD Fourth World supporter

“It took me two and a half years to rebuild my home because I had insurance, but there are families who are still dispersed who may never be able to come back to New Orleans. [...] Landlords had families move out, repaired the units, doubled the rent, and accepted new tenants. FEMA agreed to pay unbelievable prices for rent. As a result, landlords raised rents to FEMA acceptable rates.”

- Dee Mauss, ATD Fourth World supporter

“How righteous are we as a nation regarding housing for people who need it? And how righteous are we towards our brothers and sisters who are homeless and living pretty much all the time on edge? We in New Orleans are probably one of the places in the United States with the greatest understanding of the value and the importance of housing. Katrina did that for us if we hadn’t figured it out before that.”

- Brother Don Everard, Hope House



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Fact Sheet

“Not Meant to Live Like This”

- Is a unique collection of 50 co-authors’ first-hand accounts about living in poverty, before, during and after Hurricane Katrina.
- Features a foreword by Professor William Julius Wilson, Harvard University
- Covers themes of education, violence, health care, criminal justice, discrimination, Hurricane Katrina, and human rights.
- Highlights the vibrant, but often neglected, history, culture, and communities of New Orleans’ poorer districts.
- Originated from the idea of Eula Collins, a co-author who was displaced to Texas after Katrina and the title of the book came from Emelda Johnson, a co-author who sadly passed away in 2008.
- Launches at the McKenna Museum, New Orleans, 26th August, 5-7:30pm and will make several stops in New Orleans before visiting displaced communities across the South.
- Is designed to ignite on-going discussions about poverty.

All Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World Movement

- Was founded in 1957 by Father Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988)
- Is an international non-profit organization which aims to eradicate persistent poverty and exclusion.
- Is committed to the participation of communities living in extreme poverty in its research and advocacy.
- Campaigns and mobilizes public opinion around issues of extreme poverty at local, national and international levels.
- Has over 100,000 members worldwide, along with action teams working in 32 countries and correspondents in over 100 countries through the Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty.
- Holds general consultative status at UNICEF, UNESCO and the UN Economic and Social Council.
- Is the US branch of the International Movement ATD Fourth World and has teams in New Mexico, New York, Washington DC, West Virginia, and Louisiana.
- Has worked in New Orleans since 1989 and currently organizes a weekly Street Library, the Festival of Learning, and a Young Leaders Training program.

Statistics

- Louisiana has the third highest amount of children (18 percent) living in areas of concentrated poverty in the States. It is about double that amount in New Orleans¹
- One in 86 adults from Louisiana is in prison and one in seven Africa-American men from New Orleans is either in prison, on parole or on probation²
- One in three Louisiana prisoners read below a fifth-grade level²
- 48 percent of 4th graders scored below a basic level of reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Louisiana³
- Compared to other US States, children in Louisiana rank 47th in overall well-being, 47th in economic well-being, 45th in education, and 39th in health⁴
- New Orleans unemployment rate (as of June 2012) stands at 7.2 percent⁵
- Louisiana minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour or \$4.25 p/h if under 20 years old⁶
- The median household income in New Orleans is 10.2% less than the Louisiana average and 27.4% less than the national average⁷



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Q & A

Why should people read “Not Meant To Live Like This”?

Through the candid narratives of 50 co-authors, we gain a unique glimpse into the lives of people who managed to not only survive Hurricane Katrina, but also extreme poverty in New Orleans. These co-authors speak about fighting poverty, defending human rights, and building sustainable communities. A foreword by Harvard Professor William Julius Wilson supports these first-hand experiences with academic analysis. This book offers a deeper understanding of not only of the challenges faced by people living in poverty, but also their incredible strength and resilience in overcoming these struggles.

How is ATD Fourth World Movement connected to “Not Meant To Live Like This”?

The Fourth World Movement’s presence in New Orleans gave its members a unique window into the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Those families who had survived for years under the weight of persistent poverty were generally the last to be evacuated after the storm. Many of them were the families with whom the Fourth World had partnered for years, and many have still not returned to the city. Since Hurricane Katrina, the team has worked with families scattered throughout the rural South to write “Not Meant To Live Like This”. This collaborative process has not only produced an incredible collection of testimonies, but also enhanced the co-authors’ self-expression and helped rebuild connections with former community members.

Where did the idea for this book project come from?

In the months following Katrina’s devastation of the Gulf Coast in 2005, ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps members based in New Orleans traveled the southern United States to reconnect with displaced members and re-establish a network of support. While visiting the Collins family in Arkansas, long-term volunteers Maria Victoire and Corrina Bain were given the idea for the book by Eula Collins. Maria and other volunteers then traveled the southern United States, tracing displaced families and recording their testimonies. The title of the book came from Emelda Johnson, a co-author who sadly passed away in 2008.

Where can people buy “Not Meant To Live Like This”?

The book will be on sale at the launch and all tour events. It is also available for purchase through our website and participating book stores in the New Orleans area. It will be available through Amazon from October. The retail price is \$31.95.

- 1) Reckdahl, K. (2012, March 6). New Orleans children still likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods. The Times-Picayune. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2012/03/new_orleans_children_still_lik.html
- 2) Chang, C. (2012, May 29). Louisiana is the world's prison capital. The Times-Picayune. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2012/05/louisiana_is_the_worlds_prison.html
- 3) Save the Children (2012). State fact sheets: Louisiana. Washington, D.C. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SAVETHECHILDREN_STATE_FACT_SHEETS_LOUISIANA.PDF
- 4) Kids Count. (2012). Interactive data wheel: 2012 kids count data book. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/databook/2012/datawheel.aspx>
- 5) Department of Numbers. (2012). New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, Louisiana unemployment. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from <http://www.deptofnumbers.com/unemployment/louisiana/new-orleans/>
- 6) Minimumwage.org and Marathon Studios Enterprises. (2011). Louisiana minimum wage 2011, 2012. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from <http://www.minimum-wage.org/states.asp?state=Louisiana>
- 7) AreaVibes, Inc. (2012). New Orleans, LA employment & jobs. Retrieved July 20, 2012 from <http://www.areavibes.com/new-orleans-la/employment/>



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The Biographies of Co-Authors Available for Interview

Patricia Denson:



Patricia Denson was born in 1959. She lived in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina hit. She had seven children over the years, and worked for a time at a supermarket. Today, Patricia is back in New Orleans. “Since Katrina, we have more struggles,” she says. Since the hurricane, only her husband is working and the family is living from pay check to pay check. Patricia baby-sits for many of her grandchildren, to allow their parents to work, often long hours. She reads the newspaper every day, and comments often on the connections between what she reads and what she sees happening in the city. In 2009, she participated in a seminar facilitated by the Fourth World Movement, entitled, “Not Meant to Live Like This.” She is an active member of a Core Group on Poverty, Violence and Peace.

Sylvia Miller:



Sylvia Miller was born in 1955. She had seven children, who participated in the Street Library over the years. She stayed on Lopez Street for about three years, but lost all of her possessions when Hurricane Katrina came through. Having evacuated to Dallas, Texas, Sylvia and her family stayed there for about two years. During that time, she struggled to secure the right treatment and education for one of her sons who needed extra support. Back in New Orleans, that struggle continued. She participated in a 2009 Seminar entitled, “Not Meant to Live like This,” and is a member of the Core Group on Poverty, Violence and Peace. She often participates in Fourth World gatherings, and contributes with her thoughts and experiences, but also with her cooking skills. Sylvia has also worked as a custodian at the police headquarters. Sylvia currently lives in the 7th Ward.

Barbara Risin:



Barbara Risin was born in 1944. She has two children, as well as grandchildren and great grandchildren. She has cared for her adopted son, George, since he was a baby. Barbara worked for 18 years as an aid in a hospital. Before Katrina, she had been living in the Irish Channel neighborhood of New Orleans, where she remembers the support given to the community by Hope House, and the way she and other community members would come together to help someone in need pay their rent. In 1992, Barbara started getting involved with the Fourth World Movement. Over the years, she worked hard to get her son the attention and services he needed to succeed at school. After evacuating to Arizona, Barbara decided to remain there because her son was finally getting the support services he needed, and she was finally getting treatment for cataracts. Barbara's husband passed away in 2001. Barbara recently returned from Tucson and is living back in the Irish Channel.

Germaine Russell:



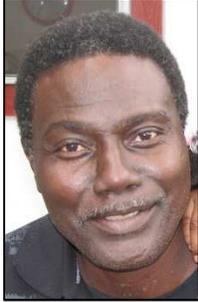
Germaine Russell was born in 1982. As a child and teenager, she participated in a Home Library, which later became a Street Library in front of her home, and took part in Fourth World Movement gatherings and events. In 2002, a short book was published, entitled “Germaine,” by Maryvonne Caillaux, recounting Germaine's and her family's struggle for a decent education. About her mother Gina, who passed away in 2005, Germaine says, “All my memories about my mother are good. I'd like to keep all those memories. My mom would get up and help the whole neighborhood, even people she didn't know.” Today, Germaine



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has a young daughter. She enjoys doing landscaping and gardening. She would like to go back to school to become a funeral director, hoping to help people who cannot have family members put to rest because of high funeral costs.

Ronald Schexnayder:



Ronald “Ronnie” Schexnayder was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in 1952. He lived in New Orleans for over 20 years following his marriage, and had six children altogether. When his mother passed away, his younger brothers and sisters came to stay with him. Ronald worked as a security guard for several years at the New Orleans Convention Center. He also took part in a two-year paralegal program at Philip Jenny College in New Orleans, during which he helped support many young people to get out of prison. Ronald got to know the Fourth World Movement through the Street Library, to which he often brought children from the neighborhood. When Katrina hit, Ronald evacuated to Atlanta, where he worked in a hospital as a janitor. When he moved to Mississippi in 2007, he started working in the hardwood industry. He worked making electrical transformers, and recycling clothes, cardboard and plastic. Ronald participated in an international seminar as part of his involvement in the New Orleans Core Group on Poverty, Violence and Peace.

Maria Victoire:



Maria Victoire was born in 1961 in Mauritius Islands. She studied book-keeping at London Chamber of Commerce and later studied Management for Rural Development for Small Scale Enterprises. She served the Institute for Development and Progress (IDP) in Mauritius for 7 years. Since 1991, she has been involved with ATD Fourth World. She arrived in New Orleans at the end of 2004, just six months before Katrina swept through the city. After living through Katrina and the long process of locating displaced friends and contacts, Maria began traveling all over the southern states to rebuild ties between families who were dispersed, and to build contacts with organizations working with people experiencing poverty. As part of this project, she began coordinating the writing of the book, “Not Meant To Live Like This” and organized a 2009 seminar of the same name. Maria continues to work for ATD Fourth World in New Orleans.