



MOUVEMENT INTERNATIONAL  
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## **International Conference at Sciences Po Paris, 17–19 December 2008.**

The International Movement ATD Fourth World, in close partnership with Sciences Po and the French Association of Political Science, is organising a conference on chronic poverty and exclusion. This event will take place in December 2008 to mark both the 20th anniversary of the death of its founder, Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988), and the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed on 10 December 1948. The political ambitions underlying contemporary democracies - freedom, peace, justice, the reduction of inequalities and respect for human rights - are being continuously challenged by reality. In both the northern and southern hemispheres, extreme poverty, violence, social segregation and exclusion drive us to rethink these ideals and their implementation.

### **Exclusion as a Challenge to Democracy: The Actuality of Joseph Wresinski's Thought**



Joseph Wresinski

<sup>1</sup> The exact places of the sessions will soon be indicated.

## **The Objectives.**

This conference is not like any other conference. Its aim is to establish a dialogue between researchers, university graduates, and people involved in the fight against extreme poverty, including those whose lives are directly affected by poverty. It highlights one of the specific features of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, i.e. its aim to associate the poorest in the design, implementation and assessment of politics which concern them directly as citizens, workers, parents etc. The research will focus on how the political thought of the founder of ATD Fourth World is still relevant, and on the importance of the “culture that refuses to accept extreme poverty” which he advocated.

Joseph Wresinski laid the foundations for a novel approach towards poverty and human rights. He was the bearer of a project that deeply challenges contemporary societies and urges them to follow through on their ideals. His thinking developed from his own personal experience of extreme poverty as well as his action in this field. It has reached the highest and most diverse circles at both the national and international levels, most notably in European institutions and the United Nations. He has inspired many works, including the report “*Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security*”, which was adopted by the French Economic and Social Council in 1987, and recognized as a landmark in the awareness of exclusion by citizens and governments.

The central objective of the conference is to revisit his works and confront his ideas with those of university graduates and people involved in research. The conference will also reposition his contribution in the historical context of how ideas and legal rights evolve over time, as well as looking at his commitment to people living in extreme poverty who face exclusion and are denied their rights.

## **A European and International Research Process.**

The conference will be the fruit of a process of research undertaken by the international teams of ATD Fourth World in collaboration with other associate organisations and universities. On 11 March 2008, the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po organised a public debate on the impact of Joseph Wresinski on French politics. The Centre for History at Sciences Po also organised a similar event, on the utility of the history of the poor, on 23 June. In French-speaking Europe (Belgium, France and Switzerland), a workshop entitled ‘The Merging of Knowledge’ has, since February 2007, been working on the conditions necessary to permit those living in extreme poverty to commit themselves, alongside others, to a common struggle. In Port-Au-Prince, a regional conference took place on 27-29 February 2008, focusing on human rights, violence and knowledge in the context of extreme poverty. Open discussions, study days and seminars have either already taken place, or will do so in the near future, in Belgium, Canada, France, Guatemala, Holland, Poland, Switzerland, Thailand and the USA. Some of these preparatory events for the Paris conference have already resulted in publications.

## **The Central Themes**

The conference is organized around four central themes, which will be presented in the plenary session and further explored in the 18 thematic workshops.

1. How to reflect and define extreme poverty.
2. How to analyse the forms with political recognition and political action available to the poorest take.
3. The way in which human rights are available and applied to the poorest and the excluded.
4. Which policies should be applied in the struggle against extreme poverty?

The International Movement ATD Fourth World is placing a series of works by Joseph Wresinski dealing with these topics at the disposal of teachers, researchers and students. This collection of writings, which is currently being translated, is available on the Joseph Wresinski International Centre website ([www.joseph-wresinski.org](http://www.joseph-wresinski.org)). To help prepare the conference, a workspace is being set up on the same website. This body of writings is also available in French through the Cerf Publishing House under the title “Refuser la misère Une pensée politique née de l’action” by Joseph Wresinski” (288 pages).

## Steering Committee

Claire Andrieu, Marie-Rose Blunsch, Axelle Brodiez, Patrick Brun, Floriane Caravatta, Gabrielle Costa de Beauregard, Michèle Grenot, Louis Join-Lambert, Bruno Langlais, Nonna Mayer, Hélène Thomas, Jean Tonglet.

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