



## International Committee for October 17

*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*

To the women and men gathered at the University of Massachusetts Boston on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the McCormack Graduate School's Center for Social Policy,

We, the members of the International Committee for October 17th, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, salute you and your unique contribution to the worldwide effort to overcome extreme and persistent poverty. Your commitments are reflected in the people you have chosen to honor tonight, men and women of diverse social and professional backgrounds who bring their know-how and experience to promoting equality and ending poverty.

Extreme poverty, marked by the social exclusion of those who experience it, destroys the lives and spirit of people. More children, young persons and adults have lost their lives from extreme poverty and hunger than from any armed conflict the world has ever known.

Over a period of three years, the International Movement ATD Fourth World conducted an action-research project "Extreme Poverty is Violence-Breaking the Silence-Searching for Peace" on the connections between extreme poverty, violence and peace, involving more than a thousand people from all over the world. During this research to understand the forms of violence experienced by people in poverty, a mother from Haiti summed it up for many with these words: "When you get up in the morning and don't know where to go, with nothing to feed your children, that is violence. When you have to fight others to defend the little you own, that is violence."

Co-researchers, people with an experience of poverty in 25 countries, cited the many policy decisions that adversely affected their lives and seemed to consider them as persons not worthy of basic human rights.

Decision makers and the authorities don't seem to care about the negative impact of their actions: Who are the people displaced by highway construction? Whose children are placed in foster care without their parents being able to communicate with them? What does a country's claim to reaching the Millennium Development Goals in education mean when so many children aged ten and older can neither read nor write?

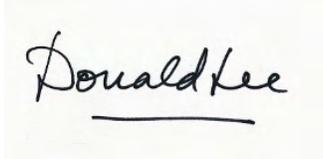
The powerful outcome of this action-research project prompted the United Nations to focus the 2012 Commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on the theme, "Ending the violence of Extreme Poverty: Promoting empowerment and building peace."

The Center for Social Policy can be justly proud of the contribution of its staff and its Constituent Advisors group to the outcome of this action-research research project. The Constituent Advisors

pointed out that keeping silent about the many forms of violence they have experienced is only doing further violence to themselves. Breaking the silence is not setting people against each other, it is making it possible for people to come together and think, act and live differently. That is what will bring peace.

We applaud your audacity and innovative spirit in creating possibilities for people with the lived experience of poverty to have a greater role in informing and guiding research. It takes the vision and professional commitment of the likes of the Center to help understand the kinds of policies that effectively take into account the strengths and knowledge of those struggling with poverty day after day. Your efforts to evaluate development and other projects designed to overcome poverty in ways that create new knowledge and understanding facilitate and guide participants, implementers and decision makers.

In choosing this day, October 17th, for your gathering, you are clearly demonstrating your solidarity with people the world over whose energy and intelligence are focused on the goal of eradicating extreme and persistent poverty. Together we can make a difference; together we can eliminate poverty.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Donald Lee  
President  
International Committee for October 17

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