



In celebration of our 10-Year Anniversary, we wanted to create a special newsletter that helps readers better understand the essence of At The Crossroads. Since day one, a guiding principle for ATC has been that relationships are the fundamental building block for everything we do. They are central to every aspect of our work and our organization. So, for this newsletter, we decided to focus on ten individuals whose relationships we genuinely cherish, who represent the thousands of people involved with ATC over the past decade. They are clients, founding board members, funders, community partners, volunteers and staff.

ATC was founded on the belief that relationships can have a transformative effect on people when those relationships are built with respect, thoughtfulness, transparency and optimism. Our commitment to this philosophy deepens every year. One of the best things about being part of ATC is that the impact of these relationships is reciprocal.

Joe, Serina, and Travis are three of the more than 5,000 young people we have reached. They are a source of constant inspiration and motivation to me and my coworkers. They have challenged my assumptions, broadened my perspective, and taught me a new understanding of strength and persistence. They have enriched my life in ways I can't describe.

Nadinne, Avner, Mary, Kevin and Lateefah are our founding board members. It's a genuine privilege to work in partnership with these five brilliant individuals to strengthen our present and map out our future; we could not be in better hands.

Kristina has shaped the image of ATC through her amazing work on our print media. She has worked into the wee hours of the morning many times to make sure that ATC's print media truly reflects our mission and spirit.



Rob Gitin

ATC Director

Ivan is one of our incredible staff members. His ability to connect with any young person whom he meets on the streets, no matter what their background, is amazing, and is a testimony to his decency, non-judgmentalism, thoughtfulness and humor.

The ten people featured in this newsletter have shaped ATC with their intelligence, selflessness, courage, generosity and individuality. They have supported us, challenged us, and taught us. Take away any one of them, and ATC is not as rich. Take away all of them, and our existence loses much of its strength and value.

In the next ten years, we want to engage thousands of new people in our organization, and deepen the relationships that already exist. We hope that after learning about some of the amazing individuals who help define us, you will ask yourself how you can get more involved in ATC. If everyone reading this newsletter does this, our next ten years will be better than the past ten, for us and for young people on the streets of San Francisco. That is, after all, why we are here: so that homeless youth and young adults can have futures that are better than their pasts. Thank you to everyone who has helped us reach this milestone!

Rob Gitin

COFOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, ATC

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Learning to Walk Your Own Path

AT THE CROSSROADS FIRST MET JOE NINE YEARS AGO ON THE STREETS OF DOWNTOWN. JOE IS PURSUING A CAREER IN MUSIC PROMOTION, AND IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE TO SUPPORT HIM IN REACHING THIS GOAL.



Joe Perryman

Client

When did you first meet At The Crossroads?

Ten years ago, I was standing on Market Street, trying to make a living, and here comes Rob and Taj, walking down the street offering peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to everybody. Anybody that offered food back then normally wanted you to go to their church or pray with them right then and there. They didn't ask for that. It took a while to build up trust and feel comfortable with them offering help and offering their services. When you're out there on the streets you don't know what someone is offering and what they want in return, regardless of how kind they may seem.

How did you end up on the streets?

I ended up moving into an apartment I could not afford. And the job that I had at the time I felt wasn't going to be able to pay the rent. So I made the biggest mistake of quitting that job to try to find another job. When that didn't come in time, I made the biggest mistake of thinking that I could go downtown and sell drugs.

When that didn't pay my rent, by that time it was way too late. I had dug myself in a hole – I got arrested, got caught and everything, you know, went downhill from there. I ended up on the streets. A lot of people don't realize that

selling drugs is addictive, just as addictive as doing drugs. And it's hard... Everybody has comfort in their kingdom – is what I call it. And the homeless people out there begging for money and doing their drugs, that's their kingdom. That's what they're used to, that's what they're comfortable with. So that was my biggest challenge back then. Just changing my frame of thought and getting off the streets. Getting out of that kingdom.

What is a "poverty pimp"?

A poverty pimp is most likely nonprofit organizations that claim that they are helping fight for the poor, but in actuality they are just making money off the poor. It's just a horrible, horrible situation in my book.

How do you think ATC is different?

The Crossroads doesn't ask anything from the poor. ATC actually allows people who are down and out to get up when they're ready to. I've always been highly impressed with The Crossroads' ability to have great foresight. They do a lot of thinking. One of my biggest sayings is people have enough time on their hands but they don't use it to think. And they think and think and think, and it's a wonderful thing. I'm always impressed by their mind frame – frame of thought. I walk away with, "God, I love these people for thinking of me the way they do. For thinking of others the way they do." It is such consideration, which is something that you don't get in this world today.

Has your relationship with ATC changed over the years?

Yes, yes it has. I utilize Crossroads a lot more now, especially because of the situation that I'm in. I started to go into business for myself, promoting events. I ruptured my Achilles – and without a foot you can't promote. I also couldn't receive any cash from state disability

because my last job was exempt. Poverty pimps again. So I was basically on the verge of being evicted – still am. And had no type of cash flow or income whatsoever and I couldn't even get around to go and look for work or stay in business myself.

How did ATC support you through that time?

Crossroads came through to my house, brought me food. They talked to me. You know, gave me encouragement. Let me get stuff off my chest. And just let me know that hey, you know, in time things are going to get better. But right now you do have to deal with this and here are a couple of routes you can go if you so choose to. It's always nice to know there are people there that are concerned and are aware of what you're going through. It helps with your confidence.

Can you think of a way that you've been impacted by ATC?

I walk taller now. I just always try to think more, try to be more thoughtful to others. Take my dog. My friend asked me "why you givin' your dog fake chicken, and not just table scraps?" Because dogs can't cook, and this dog is stuck with me. So I do my best to give this dog the best life that it can. And I don't think I probably would have ever saw that if it weren't for ATC. And I know I'm talking about a dog, but that's basically what it comes down to.

What's your biggest challenge today?

I would say it's walking down the street now and seeing the people that I've left behind. And seeing those that have fallen off and saying wow, this could have been me. And to actually not be able to pick somebody up, grab 'em by the collar and say, "I'm taking you down to this place, I'm gonna get you a job and you're gonna get an apartment and you're never gonna come out here again." It's so hard not to do that. But you have to let people walk their own paths. I've learnt that from The Crossroads, that you can't force people to do it, they have to do it in their own time. It's hard to be out there like that, but when you're ready, you will come. Focus on yourself and if others need help, I'll be there.

I love these people for thinking of me the way they do. For thinking of others the way they do.

NADINNE IS ATC'S BOARD CHAIR AND CURRENTLY WORKS AS AN INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT IN HIGHER EDUCATION. SHE IS A NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED LEADER IN SERVICE LEARNING. NADINNE FIRST GOT INVOLVED WITH ATC WHEN SHE WAS STANFORD UNIVERSITY'S DIRECTOR FOR THE HAAS CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, AND ROB GITIN AND TAJ MUSTAPHA WERE STUDENTS.

Shared Practice of Integrity

How did you first get involved with At The Crossroads?

I got involved with At The Crossroads before it was even an idea in the minds of the co-founders Rob Gitin and Taj Mustapha. I would meet with them, lunch and munch with them and talk with them. It seemed to me it was a very close collaboration of partners, in the way I imagine artists who are partners collaborate on writing. I imagine Taj and Rob that way, talking all hours, having a lot to say and maybe question what they were doing. Should we have done this, do you think we should pursue this? And all those kinds of questioning spoke to the very strong integrity that was there from the very beginning.

Was there any particular reason why you chose to support them?

Again I come to the word integrity. It flowed naturally from who they were, what they were interested in, what compels them to act. There is always some new language in the nonprofit sector that becomes the buzz word. And I didn't hear those from their lips. I saw this earnestness of purpose and deep thoughtfulness right from the beginning.

How have you seen ATC change?

Well, there is this word to describe change, that probably some people will cringe at, and that's institutionalization. When it becomes more than a person or two out of their back pockets, so to speak, and the work becomes to some extent codified with certain patterns and expectations. It's no longer one person's idea and experiments, but now it's shared with more and more people.

And you think that's a change for the better?

Yeah, I think that any endeavor, if it's going to be sustainable, is going to have to be shared with a larger group of people and will



Nadinne Cruz

Board Chair

I think that the contribution of ATC down the road is to be more intentional about influencing the field, by being more proactive and involved in circles of professionals that are shaping expectations for what high standards are for the work in this area.

then require an infrastructure to support a collective endeavor. With any organization there's the fear of bureaucratization. But ATC can't reach out to more homeless youth or go to greater depth if it doesn't have more organization. So I think it's necessary.

Do you think part of ATC has been sacrificed through this institutionalization?

I think of the work of ATC more like an art form. Less like, "Oh, now you're going to school for social work and to learn these methods." I think it's a way of being. It's a way of being present to the youth who live on the streets. The loss could be the danger that the art form will be diminished and that some people may misperceive the depth of the practice and interpret it as, "Oh, here are these methods, and if you just master these 10 things you're a good ATC staff." I don't think it works that way. ATC, at its core, is about the quality of relationships with the youth and that's why trust is engendered. The quality of the presence of the person is – I think to some extent you can't train it, if you don't already have that. But you can learn how to practice it in principled ways so that it's not just your individual interpretation of what ATC is – so that it's a shared practice.

Do you have a sense of why you chose to be part of the Board?

(laughs) The last thing on earth I wanted to do to be part of yet one more Board and be the Chair, but I was convinced only because ATC is probably one of the supreme great examples of the type of organization that it is. This is with doing the one-to-one literal outreach. The young people who live on the streets could be my son. They could be anybody's son or daughter. And... many of them are really quite delightful human beings. I think that the big systems level policy-oriented work is absolutely necessary. But that has to be grounded in our capacity to have compassion towards anyone in need. And I think that is often a forgotten building block of our capacity to deal with very big systems-wide picture. And I think sometimes there's a kind of a... snobbishness, "Oh, we only deal with policy and we only deal with systems." As if there wasn't a need to have the capability to reach out to one individual. And when I think that happens, we bankrupt system-oriented work. Because there is no memory of what it means to deal with one person.

How you would like to see ATC grow?

The work of ATC is the embodiment of a critique of current practices. Rather than saying, "Oh, we criticize this or that," ATC just goes ahead and does what it thinks is the better way to do it. I think that the contribution of ATC down the road is to be more intentional about influencing the field, by being more proactive and involved in circles of professionals and organizations that are shaping expectations for what high standards are for the work in this area. It takes time to think, and I know that people working day to day in the streets with youth would laugh at me if I were to say, "Maybe we should have, once every summer, a kind of a convening of practitioners and scholars and volunteers and policy makers, so that we can share experiences about what seems to work and not work in this area of homeless youth." The people who know them best, because they work day to day on the streets with them, have a working theory. They just don't stop and talk the theory. They're embodiments of the theory.

Coming to School

Ivan Alomar

Staff Member



I feel like I learn so much every time I meet with a client — about life, about society, about the criminal justice system, anything, you know. It's a motivating factor to me to get up every day to learn; it's like coming to school.

Ivan joined ATC three years ago as a Mission Counselor, and became ATC's first Senior Outreach Counselor last year. This summer, he will become ATC's Community Resource Coordinator.

What attracted you to At The Crossroads?

Two things: continuing to work in the communities that I have always wanted to work in, which were poor communities and people of color; and the opportunity to do something positive in the neighborhood that I grew up in, which was here in the Mission.

What was it like when you had your first one-to-one meeting with a client?

My first one was someone who was very unique. Like I said, I grew up working with young kids, mainly young kids of color. And so my first client here was an older client at the organization, but was also like a white male who had a past of being associated with the skinheads and the white power movement. Had swastikas tattooed up and down his arm and neck and stuff. And so that's who shows up at the door the first time in the morning. And so it was more like, wow, what is this going to be like, right? And I think that client was also like, wow what is *this* gonna be like? And so it was kinda more like, all right, well, let's make it work, let's see how this is gonna go.

But what was cool is that I think the client trusted ATC and so felt comfortable to where there wasn't a lot of awkwardness. It was exciting actually. And then I ended up really building a great relationship with that client over a long time. Like what we both probably pictured for ourselves, or what we thought

could happen in this relationship, like our looks and our pasts didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was where we went from the first day we met in building our relationship.

What's it like to

have a client that you've worked with over a number of years?

It took a while being a counselor here to really realize what it is that we do even as counselors and what our relationships mean to the clients, to realize what role our relationship plays in them attaining their goals. Clients are where they're at, in different places in their lives, and our relationship stays the same regardless of where they're at. The consistency of our relationships, regardless of what they're doing, has been the best part. Like whether they're attaining goals, our relationship is still great and it's positive and it's still there. And even if they're not at the moment attaining the goals that they may want for themselves, our relationship is still great, it's still positive and it's still there and still valuable to them.

How has ATC made an impact on you?

When I came to ATC I had about eight years' experience working in different nonprofits, but it's always been as a frontline worker. I think over the time of being here, the support that ATC has given me with professional development has made me think about where do I want to be as part of ATC, and also where do I want to be in my own personal life and professional development. Now I get to use that previous experience I had and what I've learned here and help to support the young counselors that are coming on staff. This time that I spent with ATC is the first time in my life I've been able to think beyond just making a living, and think about actually making a career out of this.

How have you seen ATC change?

I think there is a lot of stability here now, being as fully staffed as we have been in the entire time that I've been here. We have really good young excited counselors that are passionate about their work and are thinking about how best to grow in their positions. And the number of volunteers and people committed continues to grow, and the board coming on. It seems a young organization that's growing, but also staying true to its core.

What is the most fun part of your work?

The best part of working at ATC is actually the staff. It's hella fun to work at At The Crossroads. The staff is hella cool. It's hanging out, it's talking mess and then, yeah, it's really just spending time on outreach talking about whatever, whether it's talking about serious issues like the criminal justice system or racism or some of the challenges that our clients are facing, or talking about like what they did this weekend.

What motivates you to do this work?

Somewhere in my teen years, I just got really interested in the Civil Rights Movement and the whole Black Power Movement and things like that. So once I started opening up my mind to that sort of thinking, working in the community was kinda something that I wanted to do. And so I love the relationships that I get to build with the people in those communities. And that's what makes me enjoy coming to ATC everyday — the relationships, getting to meet people and talking to people and seeing where they're at. I mean, I feel like I learn so much every time I meet with a client. They definitely teach me at least as much, if not more than I can ever teach them — about life, about society, about the criminal justice system, drugs, family, violence, anything, you know. They teach me so much it's a motivating factor to me to get up every day to learn; it's like coming to school. On a personal level, just having a daughter and just knowing that she's going to grow up in the same communities that I'm working in now is a motivating factor every day, to get up and try to do something to make it better for her.

A MEMBER OF ATC'S BOARD, AVNER FIRST BECAME INVOLVED WITH AT THE CROSSROADS SEVEN YEARS AGO, WHEN HIS DESIGN SHOWROOM, SLOAN MIYASATO, WAS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SUPPORT WORTHY COMMUNITY PROGRAMS IN SAN FRANCISCO. IN 2003 HE THREW A 50TH BIRTHDAY PARTY IN HONOR OF ATC THAT RAISED \$20,000.

What was the idea about At The Crossroads that struck a chord with you?

I remember hearing about the fact that this is a group that works directly with homeless youth, on the streets of the city, without preconditions, without any... suggestions to what the kid should be doing, where he should be going, and how he should be living his life. I heard things that were fresh, that were new, that were exciting, and I related, because of my own personal history.

What's that history?

I was an asthmatically sick kid, and from ages 12-20, I was sent away from my parents. So even though I found ways to care for myself and never really found myself on

Here we were on a Wednesday night prepping little plastic bags filled with candy; the next day they're being given out on the street. Simple assistance.

the streets, I relate to teenagers who are away from home, in whatever capacity, for whatever reason. That was my connection that resonated with me, that here we are helping kids who are separated from family, from home, from a place of comfort and safety. That meant everything.

What is it about ATC that makes you want to give so much of yourself to it?

The black and white philosophy that was presented at the very beginning about offering unconditional help, unconditional love, unconditional assistance. Recognizing kids for what they are: human beings, who are struggling, trying to live, trying to survive, trying to get away from harm, from pain, trying to find safety. Those basic ideas of being able to give a kid a pair of clean socks, a phone card to call somebody special, a T-shirt, candy bars. The whole non-bureaucratic simpleness of the organization is what really hit home. Here we were on a Wednesday night prepping little plastic bags filled with candy; the next day they're being given out on the street. Simple assistance. Relationship building, one-on-one building of trust. It's

what it takes to raise a normal kid in a home, not to mention a kid who is on the streets.

How has it been to be a board member so far?

It's challenging. We're trying to push aside all of the... disturbing and delaying projects that one has to be a part of, and go towards the core, go towards the center of what At The Crossroads needs. You need to deal with the mundane, with the boring, with the structural setup, and review of everything that happens in an organization like this. If I convince myself that it's part of what this nonprofit as a business has to go through, I'm okay with it. Also, we're all involved in businesses in our lives, so it's not as often as we would like to meet, and the time that we meet is always pressed because there's so much to do in such little amount of time. But we're becoming comfortable with each other, and we're realizing that we really do have a common goal. And what's wonderful is nobody's

raised their voice yet – knock on wood – and it's been a very peaceful experience. And that goes along with the relationship building that exists for ATC. So we're applying a lot of the principles to ourselves that the philosophy on the street follows, and that's fun. We're trying not to be ordinary. We're trying to do something special, even as a board.

What do you think it is about ATC that has enabled it to be around for the past decade?

The secret, that is not such a secret anymore, is the fact that there are staff members here who know how to connect with human beings. It is one of the most humane and special organizations I've ever run across. The idea that someone who is paid a not-so-great salary is out on the streets of the city, endangering themselves at times, amongst... whatever human misery is out on the streets of our city. That alone is everything. It feels

like it just keeps on gaining strength and gaining power. And it's not changing, it's good, it's working. So that's so attractive.

How have you been impacted by ATC?

I work in a very rarefied world of luxury and wealth, and it's not easy for us to maintain both feet on the ground. Our clients are about beautifying their environments and making themselves comfortable. And there's nothing invalid about that world. It's a wonderful world that we work in. However the contrast that exists between what we do and our support of At The Crossroads is so relevant and so clear. Our staff is excited that we support this organization, the hands-on ability to come to the At The Crossroads office and help on Prep Night. Or now meet as part of a board that is aimed at directing the future of this organization. The depth of

Unconditional Love



Avner Lapovsky

Board Member

the meaning of it is priceless. It's priceless for the company. It's priceless for me personally. I almost feel like there's just a little more direction and purpose in my life because of my involvement with At The Crossroads.

I normally don't wear a beard. And I'm wearing a beard because I'm singing songs for my "I Think I Can" Campaign, to raise money. I'm going back to a role I played in high school, of Tevye the Milkman. And I'm daring myself to make people laugh and maybe even cry a little bit. I feel like I've stretched myself to places where normally I would not have gone to had I not been involved with At The Crossroads. It's a blessing.

An Angel with Boundaries to Trust

AT THE CROSSROADS FIRST MET SERINA 10 YEARS AGO, WHILE DOING OUTREACH ON THE STREETS OF THE MISSION. SINCE THEN, SERINA HAS HAD A DAUGHTER, RETURNED TO SCHOOL, AND CONTINUED TO MEET WITH ATC COUNSELORS AS SHE WORKS ON MAKING THE LIFE SHE WANTS.

How did you first become involved with At The Crossroads?

I was 17 years old, a prostitute and a drug addict on the street in the Mission. I was in an abusive relationship with a man that I thought was my boyfriend, but really he was my pimp and I didn't realize that until later on in life. There was a lot of struggles but there was also strengths. There was determination that I didn't want to be on the street forever. When ATC came out and did outreach to me, asked me did I want any condoms or candy or socks or hygiene supplies, I wanted to reach out to somebody. And they weren't like the people on the street. They were friendly, they were non-judgmental, and they had compassion for me.

What was it like to develop your relationship with Rob?

Well, since I was on crystal meth, it wasn't too easy to trust Rob at first. I was like, "he's the police, he's the FBI, he's somebody out to try to hurt me." It's funny now, but it was not funny then! But I trusted him to the point that I could share my experiences with him, to call him when I needed somebody. And I mean, I would call him at all times of the day and night, telling him where I'm at, who I'm with, what I'm doing, so that way he would know I'm safe. And I knew that I could trust him enough with my life that if anything happened that he would be there for me.

Had you had a lot of trusting relationships?

No, no, none. Not one. I never... My mom let me down, my mom was the one who turned me out to prostitution when I was 11 years old. And after she let me down it was like I couldn't trust nobody after that. And literally, until I met Rob, that was the only person – especially a man. It's a professional relationship – I like Rob for the simple fact that he's very professional with me, he had boundaries and he stuck with them. But at the same time I know you guys care about my well-being and what's going to happen.

How has having a daughter changed your life?

(Laughs) I love that little girl. That's my life.

She changed my life a lot. I think the reason why it was a little girl that changed me is because, since I was abused my whole life, I felt like I had to protect her. And I couldn't be the person that I used to be. I couldn't dress like a prostitute, I couldn't talk the way I spoke, I couldn't curse all the time. Just wanting to protect her changed me.

How have you seen ATC change?

Just the staff, they change. But not the quality, I haven't seen that change. As long as the basic personality of the program stays the same, then it's all right.

How would you describe that personality?

Compassionate. Like everybody has the desire to help somebody. And again, non-judgmental, that's very important to me. And very honest and upfront and everybody has their boundaries.

Is there a central way you feel ATC has impacted you?

Just being there for me in my deepest, darkest moments. When nobody else was there, and I gave up all hope and I wanted to die. Rob – I say Rob because that's who I've always known – Rob was always there for me. Always. Even when I was barefoot, running in the middle of the street in traffic, cause I wanted to die, and I was just out of my mind. And I don't know where Rob came from – I guess I called him, but I don't remember that. And he just came. He's been my angel ever since I was 17 years old. That's just the way I feel. This place is an angel, they're just angels sent out to the street to help people that don't have no hope. And they come in the form of condoms and hygiene supplies and all that stuff, but really they're there to reach out to people.

What are your hopes and fears?

My hopes are to be around to see my daughter go to college and to get married and to have grandchildren. And my fear is... to fall. To go back to the person I used to be. That's a fear.

And that's a fear I struggle with every day.

Where are you today?

Today I'm doing much better. I'm 27 now. I still have my struggles, but they're not nowhere near as bad as they used to be *(laughs)*. I'm not on drugs no more, I've been clean for over two years. My mind is in the right frame. It's focused on more positive things than the negative. I still struggle with my self esteem, I still struggle with my fear of falling. But recently I received my GED.

Serina Jamarillo

Client



This place is an angel, sent out to the street to help people that don't have no hope. And they come in the form of condoms and hygiene supplies and all that stuff, but really they're there to reach out to people.

I didn't go past fifth grade in school, and I received my GED with flying colors, first time, on every test. I'm very proud of that.

What would you like to do with your life?

My goal is to open up a home for youth and prostitutes who want to get out of prostitution.

Would you take anything you've learned from working with ATC?

Yeah, the open-mindedness of the staff, that's always good. They're not forcing themselves on people. That's very important too. 'Cause people, they're trying to get off the street, but they're not really trying to have people force themselves on them, and that's very important.

MARY GREGORY, VICE PRESIDENT OF PACIFIC FOUNDATION SERVICES, FIRST MET ATC NINE YEARS AGO WHEN SCOUTING FOR NEW ORGANIZATIONS TO FUND. MARY IS ALSO A FOUNDING MEMBER OF OUR BOARD.

What first excited you about At The Crossroads?

I think the fact that At The Crossroads was really trying something new. It wasn't a shelter, but it also wasn't just a fleeting, chance meeting on the street. The purpose of it was to build relationships with young people who needed help, to frame their own goals and better their own lives. I think

It's not that At The Crossroads acts as a parent, but it is the first really supportive and non-judgmental adult presence in some of these young people's lives.



Mary Gregory
Board Member

anytime you run across somebody with the passion to create a new organization based on a new idea, that's very exciting. It's one of the purposes, to me, of philanthropy. There isn't a huge amount of money in the whole philanthropic sector, but what there is isn't tied down by bureaucratic regulation. And it gives foundations a chance to try new things, if they're brave enough to do that.

How does ATC fit in with why you got involved in the philanthropy profession? I found that it was very personally rewarding, connecting people and ideas and resources in a way that my previous work hadn't done. And so when an organization like At The Crossroads comes along, where you feel very drawn to its purpose as well as to its

leadership and its goals, it does feel really good to be able to help at that point. And I think that's one of the things I like about philanthropy, that overarching purpose of helping the community on a larger level.

How have you seen ATC change?

To see it grow from "Rob and Taj" and become more of an institution on its own and have the capacity to last over time has been really exciting. And I think Rob's very, very thoughtful way of doing that, and creating an organization that has a culture where the relationships between the staff model the relationships that ATC wants to have with the young people on the street. I think that's very powerful.

Do you feel like there's any way that ATC has impacted you?

I've found myself in recent years having the most respect for people and organizations who are able to successfully live out their values. And I think ATC is one of those organizations. And so it's provided an example of the power that thoughtfulness has,

when people are passionate about an idea, and then take that the next step by living out that idea.

What about ATC made you want to join our board?

In life sometimes we rush through, and we try to do a good job, but we don't really think about the "whys" of what we do. Sometimes we don't go deeper, and I've always felt this organization does go deeper, and that's what attracted me to be part of it. And I think so far that my hunch is definitely being corroborated by the fact that our board retreat, the conversations we've had at board meetings, have gone beyond simply policies and practices of the organization, and that's very rewarding.

The Passion to Live Out an Idea

If you could change one thing about ATC, what would it be?

The offices. I think though the offices, being as crowded and busy and somewhat chaotic as they are, for the clients who do come here, it's warm, it's welcoming, and it's perfect. But I realize that for the staff, everybody's crammed in here, and if we could do something about bettering those working conditions, I think that would be a good change.

What could ATC be 10 years from now?

I think one of its strengths is its adaptability. And so I would hope that At The Crossroads could maintain its willingness to look at itself, and look at itself in the context of the city, and keep that awareness of what needs to happen. It may not be, in 10 years, that street outreach is really the most effective way to reach this population. With any luck this population won't exist. We will have done some other things, in terms of policy: making counseling more available to young people, reducing the stigma around counseling, perhaps even getting counseling back into schools. So, helping with those accessibility issues for young people. There are a lot of things that I can see that could be instituted in the future that could help erase the problem that ATC right now exists to serve or to ameliorate.

What makes ATC unique?

I think Rob really wanted this organization to act a little bit differently towards young people and really have the focus on them, and start with them where they are. I have two daughters, 19 and 26 now, and having been a parent through those years, I think that what I've learned about parenting teenagers is that you really do need to let them exercise their own free will. And that's within limits, but you need to both inspire and guide them, but also let them choose their own directions. And so, it resonated with me that that was At The Crossroads' philosophy. It's not that At The Crossroads acts as a parent, but it is the first really supportive and non-judgmental adult presence in some of these young people's lives. And so, I think there's a parallel there in the attitude, towards valuing that individual and trusting them to know what's best for them. I think that's a very powerful thing.

An Education on the Lives of Homeless Youth

Kristina Batiste

KRISTINA HAS BEEN VOLUNTEERING HER DESIGN SKILLS TO ATC FROM DAY ONE. SHE HAS CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THE ORGANIZATION, DESIGNING THE SEMI-ANNUAL ATC NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER PRINT MEDIA.

What do you see as the role of At The Crossroads' newsletter?

Whenever I'm thinking about the newsletter, I try and think about how I viewed the homeless population and this work before I knew very much about it. Some of the processes that At The Crossroads does, like with harm reduction or buying kids lunch or whatever, sometimes people who are outside of the community don't understand some of that stuff.

You used to not understand that stuff?

Before volunteering here, I didn't know anyone who was homeless. I've gotten a lot of education over the years about what that population is, and some of the issues that affect them and things I never would have even thought of had I not been involved with At The Crossroads.

Can you give an example?

If you cheat on your diet, and you eat a cheeseburger, that doesn't mean you're never going to lose weight or you're never going to be okay, you just made a mistake.

The simple things about how... some of the challenges involved in getting a job, or getting a place to live, or the challenges that are involved in living on the streets, what that really means. And I had some kind of general opinions about drug use among homeless people and alcohol abuse and addiction and those have changed a lot. I didn't know about the concept of harm reduction before I got involved with At The Crossroads, and now I have a pretty good understanding of what that is and why it's valuable. I just have a more nuanced view of the whole structure. I think I've become a lot of more sympathetic, I've become a lot more understanding.

Why should other people be educated?

I just think it's really important for people to have conversations around why it's not the end of the world if At The Crossroads works with kids who maybe have drug addiction

problems or alcohol problems and they're in process with that, and that At The Crossroads' goal isn't to immediately get them to stop doing whatever behavior they're doing but to understand the person. I think it's very important.

How is the newsletter an important tool?

I try to present ideas in ways that are really accessible to people for whom the homeless population is really foreign, something that is outside of your world and you're not thinking of and a lot of the issues they face just don't occur to you. So in terms of the newsletter, I think about people like me or my mother or my grandmother, if they can understand it. Is



this something that is relevant to them and how can we make this more real.

Have you gotten ATC to think about it from the

view of people outside this work?

Oh, I think definitely. Anytime I've edited or helped Rob with his letter from the director, I'm really able to think about it and say, "When you say something like that, to somebody who is outside of the world, this is what they're hearing, or this is what that sounds like." You need to provide a little bit of context, you need to make it a little more accessible to someone.

I remember one time Rob was writing an article about some of the challenges with emergency housing – where somebody moves in for the first time and there's a lot of rules around all of that. It's hard for someone who's not in that world to understand why that would be hard. Because your first thought is, well, you're inside. You're in a house. You should be happy and you should never mess up and it'll be great.

present that to them in a different way, and say maybe it's like when you're on a diet. And sometimes, if you cheat on your diet, and you eat a cheeseburger, that doesn't mean you can never be on a diet again, or you're never going to lose weight or you're never going to be okay, you just made a mistake. And sometimes when you move into a new situation, it's hard to change your habits, it's hard to do something different. And if you get kicked out on the very first mistake, that's a very harsh judgment, it's a very harsh way of trying to help someone. So... just being able to present something in a context that people understand and are familiar with.

How you would like to see ATC grow in the next 10 years?

Wow. Well... because of the model that you have, it's not that I see At The Crossroads becoming some huge, gigantic organization, because I think that in some ways that might undermine those personal relationships that you're able to develop and really connect with the individual. I can see ATC having a larger influence on both the local and national governance of and advocacy for homeless teenagers. I think that people who come through and work at ATC really become experts in that field and I think that those people are hopefully going to have a lot of influence in policy development and how we as a society interact with homeless teenagers and young adults.

From Client to Peer

KEVIN FIRST MET ROB AND TAJ AS A CLIENT ON THE STREETS OF THE MISSION 10 YEARS AGO. SINCE THEN, HE HAS GOTTEN OFF THE STREETS, OVERSEEN THE GROWTH OF TWO NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PRINTING FIRMS, AND CONTINUES TO MEET WITH ROB, NO LONGER AS A CLIENT BUT NOW AS A BOARD MEMBER. HE IS CURRENTLY VICE PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER OF MOTION COMPANY, A CONTRACT SCREEN PRINTER IN WEST SACRAMENTO.

What were your first impressions of At The Crossroads when you met them on the street?

I was not a real social addict. I didn't really want to be around other people or ask for help. Yet one of the dynamics that ATC brings to the relationships with their clients is one of not being better than them or looking down on them. So that helped me to talk to them. Many other people talked to me by saying, "Oh you should be doing this, Kevin," "Oh, you should've done that." It was never those kinds of conversations with ATC. Rob and I have different backgrounds, different upbringings and I've never felt better than or worse than Rob. Those are the kind of relationships that I've really enjoyed building.

Can you take me through the different steps in your life and how your relationship with ATC has changed?

At the end of 1997, I ended up going to jail and then to Walden House. The judge gave me the choice of prison or program and I'm not a guy that would be prepared for prison at all and so I chose the program. And then I started working for Ashbury Images, a print shop. We were getting newsletters from At The Crossroads actually, and I was like, man, Rob's still doing that. So I think I called him and asked him if he needed clothing donations. He was like, sure, yeah. So he came out and he didn't recognize me at all at first. I went from 120 lbs. to 180 lbs. He was just blown away.

So our conversations kinda picked up again, but in a really different way. It was more of a peer relationship. At The Crossroads started growing and we kinda found ourselves in similar situations, where he was running At The Crossroads, and it became a much bigger organization, and by the time I had worked for Ashbury Images for seven years, I was running it, and we were hiring and training up to 20 people a year and doing \$3.5 million



Kevin McCracken

Board Member

Rob helped me make the decision to go out on my own. He didn't help me by saying, "You should go do this." He helped me in the way that At The Crossroads helps its clients and said, "What is it you want? What do you need?"

in business. Rob helped me make the decision to go out on my own. He didn't help me by saying "You should go do this." He helped me in the way that At The Crossroads helps its clients and said, "What is it you want? What do you need?" And when the answers became clear, it was time to move on. Every time I see somebody who works at ATC when I'm out, it's the same kind of support. It's amazing. Like it really is an amazing community. Obviously, I love it here.

I feel like the work I've done on myself has changed my perspective on my life and allowed me to do things that – I mean, there were a lot of people who were like "Wow! Look at where you came from and look at where you are now!" And it's really not what it's about for me. This is where I feel like I should have been my whole life, and I was never secure enough in myself to do it. So, you know, things have changed, a lot.

Why did you decide to join the board?

Rob started tossing around this idea about a board couple of years ago. At that time, we were giving a lot of money to ATC – or a lot of clothes to ATC, my parents started donating to ATC, my aunt now gives a yearly contribution in lieu of a Christmas gift to my wife and me. One of the questions Rob had for me was could I set aside my personal beliefs and be part of an organization, that isn't about complete abstinence. I'm completely abstinent and I don't believe for myself that I could have been any other way, like I don't think harm reduction would have worked for me, because every time I used at all, I'd be back on the street. That was part of the conversation about me joining the board. I had to actually think about it. And what came back to me when I was doing the thinking was how Rob treated me when I wasn't ready. And I was like, you know what? This is something I can do.

How do you think you've impacted ATC?

Boy. People are wearing black hoodies (*laughs*), I know that. Obviously, on that most basic level. I know what people on the streets need. I try to assist Rob in finding apparel donors and I donate apparel to the organization. Obviously, financially, just telling people about the organization and hopefully, hopefully my story has been one of the successes of At The Crossroads. Being involved and not being embarrassed about where I was 10 years ago. I've learned that people that are the most honest about their lives to me are the most inspiring. If you are open, no one can say anything bad about you behind your back, you know? This is who I am, this is where I came from.

How have you been impacted by ATC?

Without getting super mushy about it or – because I've had to go through so much myself over the last 10 years, I have a hard time with people who are super clingy and needy. Sometimes when I just want to say "just pick yourself up!", I kinda think about it and go "Well, actually I probably can be a little bit more compassionate in this situation and understanding." Somebody gave it to me, so my responsibility right now is maybe to give some of that to the person that's calling me or clinging to me. Kinda just give 'em, "What do you need? What's going on?" That's probably the single biggest impact.

Like Lunch with an Old Friend

AT THE CROSSROADS FIRST MET TRAVIS ON THE STREETS OF DOWNTOWN ONE YEAR AGO. HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING WITH HIS COUNSELORS ON SECURING HOUSING WHILE CONTINUING TO HONE HIS MUSIC SKILLS.



Travis Jones

Client

Why did you first hook up with At The Crossroads?

My experience with outreach workers in New York was just terrible. I really didn't respect 'em. So, this particular day, mid-April, it's raining. I'm hungry. I used to be able to make a lot more money panhandling in New York, and I wasn't having any luck. And Naomi and Joy came up and, you know, "Are you hungry? You need a sandwich? You need some socks?" It was like yes, yes, yes. I need all these things. So I was in a particularly... receptive state of mind, to allow them to come into my life. And it's really been outstanding. Ever since I got involved with At The Crossroads, I felt like it's really been something that's kind of helped me sustain at least a somewhat more healthy lifestyle.

Did you start meeting with Naomi and Joy right away?

I saw them on outreach for a couple of days. When they had given me the card I had noticed – because my shoes, I had sneaker rot real bad – that they would purchase shoes. So I was like, well, I've got

to call and set up a meeting. We went down to Marshall's and got a pair of Converse Chucks and got some Carl's Jr. And I remember thinking like, wow, this is really cool. I've never experienced a group that was so cool, hip, and like, you know, receptive, but also not like pushy. They have all the services for you, but they're not going to force anything on you.

Now when I see Naomi, or Joy – I know them the best – I feel like I'm sitting down to lunch with an old friend. You feel steeped in familiarity. It really just seems like you're at home.

And you and Naomi started working on your housing?

I had housing for a little bit, in an SRO, but it was only for a six month period, and... That's kind of like one of the problems with the bureaucracy – I was about to start volunteering at Alcatraz Island, I was about to start classes at City College, and then here I am back out on the street again, for a month and a half. And six months is not enough time to even start addressing some of the problems that you have.

What is your life like now?

One of my friends works at Peace Action West, the Berkeley chapter. I had a job out there for a couple weeks, but it was hard to maintain because I was fighting to get \$3 to get out there, \$3 to get back and then successfully feed myself, and keep up my habits. I have so much going on in my life – it's basically more than a full time job just to achieve wellness. And to try to keep some element of like, not looking homeless, trying to present myself as being somebody who is not a complete scumbag, it takes work. And you've gotta do laundry, you gotta keep up on it, you've gotta like, shave in the bathroom. Even right now I feel a little unkempt.

I guess one of my biggest things that I struggle with are little insecurities like, I'm a guitar player. And when my fingernails are all dirty, it really makes me feel less than, and I shouldn't really feel less than anything. I think we're all equal, at the level that we're all human. We're all like... Our insides are all the same, and how we look on the outside it's the process of genetics, environment, conditioning. But, we all start off more or less the same. I think we should start looking at each other that way more and more.

How does ATC look at you?

As I said before, ATC doesn't push you. They offer things that everybody needs and everybody wants when they're on the street. But also, they kinda give you these other options. Naomi never says, "You should do something like this." She says, "Well, you might want to try something like this,"

or "You can always try other things." She suggests things that, sometimes, it's just a seed that's planted, and then I go, actually, yeah, that's a good idea.

They make you feel real comfortable. If you wanna just meet and have a bite to eat, and like talk about doing this or that, you can. If you wanna talk about your life, you wanna talk about music, whatever. Now when I see Naomi, or Joy – I know them the best – I feel like I'm sitting down to lunch with an old friend. I feel real comfortable talking about anything and everything. It's really welcoming, it's just... you feel steeped in familiarity. It really just seems like you're at home. And when you don't have a home, that's something that really helps.

Do you see yourself remaining connected to ATC for a long time to come?

Oh absolutely. Even if I became more stabilized in my personal life and I did finally get back into college and finish my bachelor's, I could see myself volunteering and contributing to this organization. It's meant a lot to me over the past year. I hope to stay with the organization for years to come.

I can't convey enough how invaluable this organization's been to me. Even when I was housed, the way I was able to eat. I was able to feed myself, stay clothed. All the contributors – I don't know how you guys get Levi's, Dockers, Old Navy and all different places to contribute the way they do, but it's really outstanding. And sometimes, when you're out there on the street, you don't realize – you feel like all these people walking around, they don't care and like, many of them are people who are involved in things like this.

Redefining Family Dinner

BOARD MEMBER LATEEFAH SIMON FIRST CONNECTED WITH ATC 10 YEARS AGO WHILE WORKING FOR THE CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT, WHERE SHE BECAME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT AGE 20. SHE IS CURRENTLY THE DIRECTOR OF REENTRY PROGRAMS FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, AND HAS RETURNED TO SCHOOL.

How did you first get involved with At The Crossroads?

When I was working at CYWD as an Outreach Worker, before I became Director, we would meet kids and they would say, "Are you from At The Crossroads?" It became really clear that there were two amazing young people that were out very late and working with people on the streets. I was taken aback by Rob and Taj's understanding of what was going on and their curiosity of wanting to learn from young people, so I became a friend of the organization.

What in your life connects you to ATC?

I know what it feels like to be young, poor and with no place to go. The streets is the community of so many young people. I remember being out all times of the night as a young person and folks would just pass us by, yell at us or physically step over us. But sometimes home was just the place where you couldn't be, it was safer, sometimes warmer on the streets than it was in our cold environments. Because no matter what, regardless of policy changes that we make, regardless of how we reshape this city, there will always be young people who don't feel safe at home.

Why do you think that is?

In homes, young people are often extremely powerless. And the only power that they have in their homes, when they are under these conditions, is to leave. And if every institution that was supposed to protect you fails you – foster care, education, social services – if you are literally the one who has to fend for yourself, that's what you have to do. My hope though, is that there will always be people for those young people to come to, not only when they need something, but when they don't need something, they can just be.

How do you see ATC fitting in the landscape of social services?

Organizations like At The Crossroads prove that you can reach a ton of kids and provide a lot of joy, and it doesn't cost a lot of money. And you can not only bring joy but you can really change the way that the social systems work for young people by providing them an opportunity to understand who they are and their power in determining their own lives. I think ATC's methodology of youth development is pushing the paradigm of social services to redefine what success is for young people. Success should be really determined by the human being themselves and not by the social systems. So I think if folks just listened to the kids that were served by this program, we can learn a lot about how to heal our communities.

There's a wonderful young woman who was on the streets and now she's leading, literally, scores of young pregnant women and creating policy, and supervising, and At The Crossroads will say, "that's not a success." A success would be her understanding that she has community. So like I like that reframing, it goes back to what I've learned about what this work is all about.

The sandwich every week has become like the family dinner. To actually have somebody to report back to who you know cares about you and that's not just getting a paycheck to monitor you.

I think At The Crossroads has redefined family for a lot of folks. The sandwich and the coffee every week has become like the family dinner, right, that folks begin to look forward to. To actually have somebody to report back to about what I'm doing, like most kids would do with their mother and their father or their aunt and their uncle. So in redefining how

young people utilize services, I think that that's really crucial and that's something that I think we as a community need to think more deeply about. How do we keep young people engaged and inspired in their own processes without everything being judged by a form or an in-take? That's what keeps young people coming back to this program. Again, it's like Sunday dinner, it's like reporting back to somebody who you know cares about you and that's not just getting a paycheck to monitor you.

Is that one reason you joined ATC's board?
You don't heal intense poverty, you build

community, you know what I mean? People need community. People need to be safe. People need to wake up the next day just so that they could dream about what the possibility can be. And when we forget about the young person who decides, "You know what, actually I'm not ready to get clean, actually I'm not ready to go into transitional housing, actually I'm pregnant, and I'm still doing sex work" – those are hard conversations that a lot of people who subscribe to the old school ways of working with youth, they can't take. This organization sees young people through a very deep human lens. And I want to be a part of that. I refuse to give up on young people like me. My life has changed, I have a daughter and things are great, but I'm 30, and walking the streets at 2 a.m., being on the BART until it closes, sleeping in laundromats, that was my life at 15, 16, so those images are very, very vivid.



Lateefah Simon

Board Member

How do you envision ATC in 10 years?

It would be amazing to have 6, 7, 8 times the staff. We need more people out there on the streets when it's dark and when it's cold. When I think about ATC, I think about how in 10 years, in 20 years, no young person in SF can say that they were stepped over on the streets and that they didn't understand how to get housing, how to get food, how to get child care for their children, or they were left alone in the court systems. I want them to know that, you know, the outreach worker with the Timbuk2 bag and the crazy colored hair is coming for them, and is going to be an advocate with them.

Thank You to our Long-Term Supporters!

OVER THE PAST DECADE, HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS HAVE SUPPORTED OUR WORK, GENEROUSLY GIVING THEIR MONEY AND TIME TO BENEFIT OUR ORGANIZATION AND OUR YOUTH. IN PARTICULAR, THERE ARE A SMALL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHOM WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RELY ON YEAR AFTER YEAR; WE CAN'T IMAGINE WHERE WE WOULD BE WITHOUT THEM. LISTED BELOW ARE THE INDIVIDUALS, FOUNDATIONS, AND CORPORATIONS WHO HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING US FOR AT LEAST THE PAST SEVEN YEARS. THEY HAVE EARNED OUR ETERNAL GRATITUDE.

WE ALSO WANTED TO SHARE A LETTER FROM ONE OF OUR NEWEST DONORS, AND CERTAINLY OUR YOUNGEST DONOR. HANNAH JOINED US TO VOLUNTEER WITH HER CLASSMATES FROM THE HAMLIN SCHOOL, AND WAS MEMORABLE FOR HER CHEERFUL DISPOSITION, INQUISITIVE MIND, ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM. WE RECEIVED HER LETTER IN THE MAIL A FEW MONTHS LATER, AND WERE BLOWN AWAY. WE FOUND HER WORDS PARTICULARLY INSPIRING, AND HOPE THAT YOU DO AS WELL.

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Mary Gregory

November 26, 2007

Dear At the Crossroads,

My name is Hannah and I have worked at At the Crossroads before. I was given \$50 last year for Christmas to donate to an organization for a cause that was important to me. I forgot all about it until a few months ago, when I went to community service day at your San Francisco headquarters with my Hamlin School classmates. When I got home from school one day, a few weeks later, I decided out of all my options your organization was the best.

I want to donate to At the Crossroads because it battles a very difficult situation: Homelessness in Teenagers' Lives. It affects the way they see the world, the reactions when they are exposed to horrible circumstances, and their way of taking care of themselves. When I try to imagine what it would be like to be without a family and a roof over my head, I feel moved to help stop this awful situation.

I am happy to donate to At the Crossroads because I live in San Francisco and am able to observe the current homeless environment and the act of giving support to a homeless teenager fills me with joy. Please let me know what the money goes to.

Thank you for your time and effort,

Hannah (age 12)



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