



## NORTH AMERICAN NEW HUMANIST FORUM

MX|US|CA > NEW YORK CITY 16-18 NOV 2007 THINKING BEYOND BORDERS

On 16-18 November 2007, more than 300 activists, academics, students, media and social and religious leaders from Mexico, Canada and the United States gathered in New York City for the first **North American New Humanist Forum: *thinking beyond borders***. The forum was sponsored by the Center of Cultures (Canada/USA/ Mexico), the Community for Human Development (Mexico/USA) and the Hunter College School of Social Work and included participants from 38 social, political and cultural organizations and 15 educational institutions.



While acknowledging the deep relationship that already exists between our three countries, the forum addressed the need for a new regional consciousness that emphasizes and values the *human* rather than the economic as its priority. We recognize that many of the problems faced by the peoples of our region are the same --- yet we also realize that no one country is going to resolve them by itself. This theme was explored through 5 panels and in

10 “working tables” where participants engaged in discussion and planning on such themes as (Im)Migration, Cultures, Environment & Alternate Sources of Energy, Economy, Development & Social Justice, Spirituality as a Social Force, Women, Youth, Real Democracy/New Political Movements, Education, and Disarmament.

Other highlights of the three days included:

- an inspiring opening-night address by anti-war activist and writer Daniel Berrigan, one of the strongest voices for social justice in our time, on the theme of reconciliation;
- a keynote address by Tomás Hirsch, the 2006 Chilean Presidential candidate for "Juntos Podemos Mas", the broadest left-wing alliance since the time of Salvador Allende. Hirsch, currently the spokesperson for New Humanism in Latin America, spoke about the process of integration underway throughout the world, and the need to give a new direction to this process in North America that respects diversity, is decentralized, and does not impose itself through violence;
- a special screening of the new documentary, "FRAUDE: Mexico 2006," by renowned Mexican filmmaker Luis Mandoki, which profiled the corruption in last year's



presidential election in Mexico. The film was introduced by the filmmaker's brother Pablo Mandoki;

- a panel presentation by the Chief of the Pessamit Innu, Ralph Picard, who spoke about the effect of treaties such as NAFTA on his people's sovereignty and on Indigenous Rights;
- a tribute to Bolivian President Evo Morales (accepted by the Bolivian Ambassador to the UN) for his efforts to open the political process to all people of his country and for his leadership in incorporating non-violence into the Bolivian constitution.



A closing declaration was produced outlining the major themes of the forum and highlighting several proposals for future action, including calling for an end to the scapegoating of immigrants and all those marginalized, the condemnation of trade agreements which reinforce the growing imbalance between labor and capital, and the complete dismantling of the nuclear arsenal which is threatening the life of the

entire planet.

"The Forum was real democracy in action," said Chris Wells, North American spokesperson for New Humanism. "In response to the growing crisis, the people of our region are becoming protagonists in the process of humanizing our institutions and our social and economic structures. To humanize is to value the human being above all else, with a commitment to overcome all forms of violence and discrimination, recognizing that progress for the few ends up being progress for no one. This is the meaning and the mission of humanism in these times."

What was truly notable was the spirit, the enthusiasm and the profound dialogue that took place on all levels among the diverse group of people. Over the three days, a great body of work was accumulated, covering many spheres of human concern. This work will be the starting point for a new North American process that will continue from here on, culminating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> North American New Humanist forum, to take place in Mexico City in spring 2009.

For a complete record of the proceedings and the documents produced by the forum, please go to [www.newhumanistforum.org](http://www.newhumanistforum.org)

