

Brazil Has Shown That 'Another World Is Possible'

Contributed by Flavio Rocha
Thursday, 24 March 2005

Imagine more than one 150,000 people from one hundred and thirty five different countries getting together for five days in the same city and doing more than two thousand activities.

I know it is hard to imagine that, but I was one of those thousands of people who were in Porto Alegre in Brazil last January for the 5th World Social Forum. It went very well.

The World Social Forum was created by an Israelian naturalized Brazilian, Oded Grajewm and other activists to oppose the World Economic Forum that happens every year in Davos in Switzerland.

One could find from radical leftists to new age folks doing meditation, from environmentalists to a gathering of Franciscans. The best thing is to see everybody "playing their own instrument" and respecting the other "players".

Another thing that impressed me was the number of young people, challenging the idea that youth are not interested in politics anymore. The Youth Camp had more than 35,000 people from all over the planet.

The 5th version of the Forum had a lot of new things in comparison to the previous times. All the activities - work shops, debates, cultural events, marches, rituals, lectures, etc. - were self-organized by the groups and not by the coordination of the WSF, freeing them from small responsibilities and helping the event to become more democratic.

Another novelty is that this year any group could give a proposal and it would be publicized in the Mural of Proposals. There were exposed more than three hundred proposals on how to improve our world.

One of the major issues this year was fair trade. For that reason, most of the goods were commercialized in the Porto Alegre area where the Forum was happening were been sold by peasants who are organized in projects of the Economy of the Solidarity.

Even little mementos were sold by art craft cooperatives. Besides that, the organization made seven hundred computers connected to the Internet available to the participants.

The Forum was divided in eleven themes. Among the themes, Spiritualities and Cosmvision was one included with special attention to the indigenous spirituality.

I was impressed by the diversity of the religious groups. There is still a lot to be done, but I could see the theme of the Forum: 'Another World Is Possible', is already happening when people from so many life experiences and political visions get together not to fight, but to say that they are tired of oppression and injustice in our planet.

SEJUP - Brazilian Service of Justice and Peace
www.sejup.org