

“Neither Fish nor Fowl” Identity and Culture in Migrant-led Organizations

Friday May 11th



Summary of Panel Discussion and Workshop:

- There was a discussion on the problem of defining identity, particularly for first generation of migrants and their children.
- Different testimonies were collected on how problems of integration and identity were faced by the public.
- The differences that exist between the migrant that comes to a new country and their sons and daughters that are born there and that automatically have this dual culture.
- The need to share experiences through activities with migrant communities and community organizations in order to promote culture.
- The importance of educating people on multiculturalism when they are trying to integrate into the new society. The culture of the home country need to be affirmed in the migrant communities even when there is integration.

Principal Points of Agreement and Recurring Themes:

- Culture and identity are not fixed concepts, on the contrary they change and transform. They go hand in hand with the dynamics of the migration process.
- There are differences in the reality of the different migration patterns, especially comparing migration to the U.S. with migration to Europe. Even regional migration movements have their unique contexts.
- The dialogue between the different generations is crucial in order to maintain the culture of the home country and in order to understand the culture of the receiving country.
- The direct involvement of migrants in cultural productions (such as the films shown at this Summit) is the most efficient method of talking about migration through the art and cultural contexts.

Measures Proposed:

- Governments of the countries of residency for migrants need to have programs in place that educate about being multicultural.
- Language programs promoting the migrants language, especially if they are a new population in the new country, need to be in place.
- Countries of origin also need to promote their culture so that migrants have ways of preserving their home culture when they are in a new country.