

Genfest 2024



Genfest 2024

- was an event of testimonies and entertainment in Aparecida, Brazil with 4,000 young people from 50 countries and a live streaming linking 120 nations from all over the world.
- hosted the creation of United World Communities to share talents, passions, skills, competences and continue to build a more fraternal world in their own territory.
- gave rise to 40 smaller Genfests held locally around the world.

In July 2024, 30 young adults attended Genfest in Brazil – Together To Care! They came from various parts of North America: Texas, Florida, Montreal & Quebec & Saskatoon Canada, California, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Maryland.



Phase 1 - Community service at the Fazenda da Esperança

Of the 3 phases, the most intense phase was the **first**, that of volunteering, spent at the Fazenda da Esperança in Guarancietà. The Fazenda is the first of several recovery communities, for men and women, born in Brazil starting in 1983 and now spread in various areas of the world (170 locations in nine countries, in the US it's located in Corpus Christi, TX). Founded by Fra Hans Stapel, Nelson Giovanelli Rosendo dos Santos, Lucilene Rosendo and Iraci Leit, the Fazenda da Esperança is run according to the charism of hope, linked to the Focolare Movement, with the main aim of helping men and women overcome problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction, but also depressive states related to the difficulties of life, with the aim of bringing them back to new life through a path founded on three pillars: work, community life and spiritual life.

The root that nourishes the Fazenda da Esperança, the “farms of hope”, is the same as the Focolare Movement, because they express the same desire to put the words of the Gospel into practice, especially the experience of mutual love. Chiara Lubich’s charism is like a trunk, like a



deep root. And precisely because there is this deep root, it continues to have new branches, new leaves, new flowers: this Fazenda is precisely one of these fruits. The call that God makes

through the consecrated men and women of the “Family of Hope”, who lead the “farms”, to bring hope to those who perhaps no longer have a meaning in their lives, is a call to love Him unconditionally in people who find themselves in situations of social fragility.



During our stay, in groups we paired up with a household of about 10 people to be part of the daily routine. We prayed, shared stories and worked in the fields. They come from a difficult experience but nevertheless they welcomed us with joy and smiles. Their faith was visible and powerful as they participated in the mass and lived the gospel message throughout the day. One evening, a member was awarded a certificate of completion of the program. His mother and daughter were present and shared how she had prayed for God to help her son who was lost in drug addiction. After 12 months he was ready to go home a changed man. He was grateful to God for being by his side as well as his family for not giving up on him.



This seemed to be an appropriate way to conclude our week there seeing the commitment these men and women have and how they abandon themselves to God’s work.

Interview by the Fazenda TV station.

One day we were invited by the Fazenda TV station to be interviewed and later aired on a national Brazilian TV station. It was a true studio experience with arranged seating, cues, mess-ups, takes and retakes. However it presented a great opportunity to tell how we were living the experience with the members of the program.

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leO0rWNFsjI>

Community service was also completed at Centro Social Roger Cunha Rodrigues and Associação de Apoio a Criança e ao Adolescente.

Phase 2

The second phase of the Genfest: a moment of celebration: flags waving, voices singing, faces



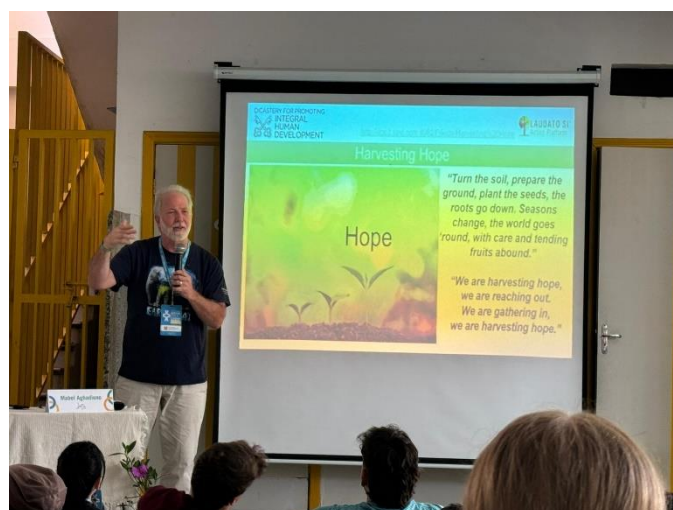
smiling, people embracing. The experiences that are lived in everyday life in every corner of the world were shared, showing the countless effort to bring hope and love into humanity.

Phase 3

Then the Genfest audience divided into various pathways for the third phase: workshops, round tables, presentations on the various themes proposed within the different paths, from the relationship between ecology and politics, the economy of communion, the challenges of artificial intelligence.

Each participant could choose a field that coincides with their profession or studies, or which holds their interests. Each field develops into a **United World Community** where we share talents and passions, aiming to address global challenges, promote personal and collective changes, and infuse fraternity into all dimensions of human life.

The final speeches by Margaret Karram and Jesús Morán were a launch, an invitation to take up the challenge of bringing the United World Communities, the “cells of unity” that Chiara Lubich spoke of, throughout the world. In closing, Margaret quoted the Chinese writer, Yutang Lin: “Hope is like a road in the fields: there has never been a road, but when many people walk along it, the road takes shape”.



What I take back

“This was my first genfest experience and the most exposure I’ve had of the focolare movement. It was amazing and I learned a lot! I heard inspiring stories of how young adults are sparking change in their communities. Witnessed different nations, religions, and people come together to celebrate and work towards a united world. And the workshops challenged us to brainstorm solutions to social, political, economical and ecological issues within our countries and around the world. Specifically, the talks on sustainability goals and the fast fashion revolution has made me reflect on the ways **I can make changes to my personal and work life** that I plan to implement when I return home.”

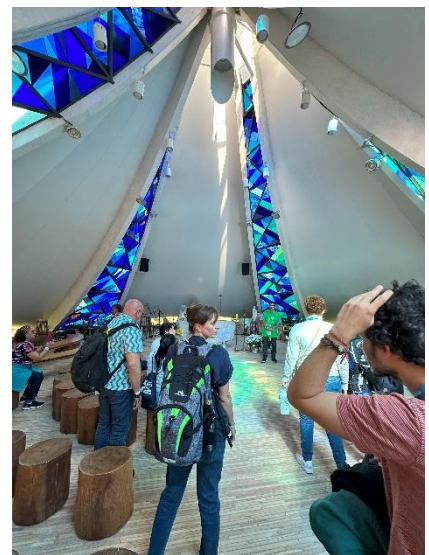
G. P.



“Being surrounded by people who aim to make a change in the world is very inspiring. It makes me **feel empowered to do something** as well back in my city/reality. We are reminded that there is always hope.”

M. A.

“Genfest was really important to me as it really helped me see beyond myself and care for others. Over the past year, I noticed my selfish and self-centeredness grow as I have been living on my own. This Genfest helped me realize how everyone wants and deserves to be loved, and **I am called to love and care for my neighbor**. For example, I hosted a couple friends for dinner tonight which, before, would have been a stressful chore for me, but this time I shifted my focus towards making sure they had a nice dinner. Having them over with this attitude made the night really joyful. The Genfest helped me understand that by **simply caring for others is my daily vocation**.” N. P.



"I thought about GenFest 2024 since I was thirteen years old—wondering how it could live up to GenFest 2018. I expected the elaborate performances and powerful testimonies from gen all over the world. However, I did not expect to create the bonds I did in the first, second, and third phase



of this trip. Despite sharing a room and bathroom with four women during phase 1, we would laugh until midnight—keeping everyone from falling asleep. The Fazenda also felt like a true embodiment of Focolare's mission of living for the other. Working and talking with the other women at the Fazenda helped me realize that **we are all humans with a great capacity to love and be loved**. Phase 2 and 3 did have great performances and amazing testimonies (+ that awesome basilica), but what made this GenFest special was the people. Thank you everyone for sharing this experience with me! I wish everyone the best."

S. P.



"I still talk a lot about my experiences especially about volunteering in the favelas. It deeply humbles me to this day. I felt so lucky that we had the privilege of sitting down with these families, engaging in heartfelt conversations about their living conditions. The insights I gained into their daily struggles were profound. What touched me most, however, was their extraordinary resilience and the warmth and joy with which they welcomed us. Despite facing such adversity, their genuine kindness and unshakeable spirit left a lasting impression on me."

P.M.



"The part of GenFest that impacted me the greatest was the time at Mariapolis Ginetta at the Post GenFest. We were a much smaller group than at the Phase 2 celebration so there were more opportunities to get to know one another better.

It was incredibly inspiring to see the impact Ginetta had on the country and the people who were still living the Focolare spirituality because she had such a profound impact on them. Her courage to go to Brazil and share the ideal with the power of the Holy Spirit keeps me motivated to live like Ginetta. "My Brazil" is College Station, Texas!!"

V.J.

Fazenda da Esperança <https://portalfazenda.org.br/>

United World Communities

<https://genfest.org/en/fase-03-en/>

<https://www.unitedworldproject.org/en/united-world-community/>

Youth Center for North America

<https://ycna.focolare.us/>

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