Introduction

Herbert "Betinho" de Souza was a humanitarian forced into exile by the military dictatorship in Brazil in the 1970s. During this time, Betinho lived for five years in Toronto, Canada. Among the many causes Betinho embraced and led was the Campaign Against Hunger and for Life, which triggered the new movement for food and nutrition security in Brazil.

The Betinho Project aims to rekindle Betinho's connection with Toronto. We aim to celebrate his life and work by making a contribution to the continuation of his campaign "against hunger and for life" everywhere in the world, beginning here in Toronto.

Background

In March 2004, Debbie Field (Executive Director, FoodShare Toronto), Wayne Roberts (Coordinator, Toronto Food Policy Council), Cecilia Rocha (Director, Centre for Studies in Food Security, Ryerson University), and Nick Saul (Executive Director, The Stop Community Food Centre) were invited to attend the Second National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security in Olinda, Brazil, as part of a small group of international observers. This was an opportunity to witness the culmination of a democratic process in which civil society organizations from throughout the country participated in the development of key recommendations to be forwarded to the federal government through the Brazilian National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA). For the Canadian observers, it was also an opportunity to reflect on our own challenges and opportunities in developing a movement to improve food security in Canada and elsewhere based on principles of social justice and participatory democracy.

The Conference was strongly grounded on the works of two key figures in the Brazilian movement against hunger and for food security: Josué de Castro and Herbert de Souza. The impact of the work of these two Brazilians reached far beyond their country's borders, and their legacy can still be felt today.

Josué de Castro (1908-1973) had a distinguished career as a physician, writer, diplomat and, most notably, as a humanitarian (http://www.josuedecastro.com.br/engl/frame.html). He is credited with promoting the issue of hunger as a scientific and political inquiry through books such as *Geography of Hunger* (1946), and through his work as Chairman of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). He died in France, in 1973, exiled by the military dictatorship that came to power in Brazil in the 1964 coup.

Herbert de Souza ("Betinho", as he is known by millions of Brazilians and others around the world), was also a humanitarian forced into exile by the military dictatorship. But he survived to see democracy return to his country, and to make a major contribution towards a more egalitarian, just society. Among the many causes he embraced and led was the Campaign Against Hunger and for Life which triggered the new movement for food and nutrition security in Brazil. Before returning to Brazil in 1979, Betinho lived for five years in Toronto, Canada, where he learned about the political power of civil society organizations. Betinho died in August 1997.

Upon their return to Toronto, the four Canadian observers of the Brazilian Conference felt the need to rekindle the Toronto connection with Betinho. Thus emerged the *Betinho Project* -- from our desire to celebrate Betinho's life and work, and to make a contribution to the continuation of

his campaign against hunger and for life everywhere in the world. Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security has hosted the project since then.

Betinho's Legacy

In 1973 Betinho, his wife Maria, and a few Brazilian friends were received in Canada as political refugees after fleeing the military coup that had toppled the government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Betinho was accepted as a graduate student in political science at York University and was a major force in the creation of that university's Brazilian Studies group, later the Latin American Research Unit (LARU), which became the seed for CERLAC (Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean). In Toronto he also contributed to organizations such as the Development Education Centre (DEC) and Gatt-Fly.

Returning to Brazil in 1979, Betinho and friends Carlos Afonso and Marcos Arruda founded the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses (Ibase), a leading NGO for citizenship mobilization. As a social activist, Betinho was a leading figure in several national campaigns including the National Campaign for Agrarian Reform, the Movement for Land and Democracy, the Movement for Ethics in Politics and the Citizenship Action Against Hunger, Poverty and for Life. He also founded the Inter-Disciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA), and worked with street children (receiving UNICEF's Child and Peace trophy in 1993), the women's movement, and for the democratization of communications and information using the Internet as a tool.

Betinho is one of Brazil's modern heroes. Although living with debilitating health condition (he was a hemophiliac and lived with HIV/AIDS for the last 10 years of his life), Betinho was one of the country's strongest fighters for social inclusion, citizenship and democracy. Canadians should feel honoured and proud that our country provided a home to Betinho, where he felt safe to continue developing his work.

Prepared by Cecilia Rocha, 2005