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Media Contact: Ivan Becerra
(415) 392-1000
ibecerra@finemanpr.com

MAZATLÁN FORUM, CREATING AMBITIOUS PLANS TO END POVERTY

Experts from U.S. and Mexico to tackle this persistent problem

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., February 26, 2015 – The third annual Mazatlán Forum, a meeting of world-renowned U.S. and Mexican thought-leaders, will take place March 13 and 14 in Mazatlán, Mexico, to discuss strategies to dramatically reduce poverty in both nations. The 2015 Forum is a collaboration of the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, the College of Fellows of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology (DSPT, in Berkeley, Calif.), and El Colegio de México (Mexico City). This year, the participants—a collection of scholars, practitioners and foundation heads—will lay out a blueprint for eradicating poverty in the U.S. and Mexico.

According to the Census Bureau, there are currently over 45 million people living below the official poverty line in the United States, roughly 14 percent of the population. This approaches the estimate, by the Mexican government agency Coneval, of 53 million Mexicans in poverty, which is nearly half—about 45 percent—of that country’s population. The Census Bureau also reports that the current U.S. poverty rate is higher than at any point since 1993. The Census Bureau adds that among U.S. states, California has the highest poverty rate, roughly 23 percent, when the cost of living and benefits are fully taken into account.

The Forum plans to address a key question: “Are high poverty rates inevitable”? According to Professor David B. Grusky, director of the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality and a Forum attendee, there is much that can be done to reduce poverty. Grusky suggests that recent advances in the science of poverty have opened up unprecedented opportunities to reduce poverty. “In the 1960s the architects of the country’s first ‘War on Poverty’ had no choice but to operate by hunch and guesswork, as so little was then known about poverty and what causes it,” said Grusky. “But it’s a new world now. The Mazatlán Forum will take advantage of the recent spectacular growth in knowledge about the causes of poverty and what can be done to reduce it. The view that poverty is inevitable is dead wrong. On the contrary, there are many ways to take on poverty, and the purpose of the Forum is to ask whether some of these possibilities are more attractive than others.”

The binational and interdisciplinary nature of the Forum aims to facilitate the conversation about poverty in both countries. “Because so many factors affect poverty, such as socioeconomics, politics and immigration, the complexity of the problem scares some people away from asking the big, key questions,” said Agnieszka Winkler, one of the Forum’s founders and a member of the DSPT College of Fellows. “We are not scared to ask how we should go about ending poverty. By exploring how to significantly reduce poverty rates in the U.S. and Mexico, we’ll be putting a set of concrete and powerful roadmaps on the table.”

(more)
2015 Participants

Abel Valenzuela  University of California, Los Angeles
Adam Swift  Warwick University
Agnieszka Winkler  DSPT College of Fellows
Ann Huff Stevens  University of California, Davis
Cardinal William Levada  Episcopal Liaison to the DSPT College of Fellows
David Grusky  Stanford University
David Underriner  Providence Health & Services
Enrique Valencia  University of Guadalajara
Erin Currier  Pew Charitable Trust
Greg Kepferle  Catholic Charities Santa Clara County
Gustavo Verduczo  El Colegio de Mexico
Harry Brighouse  University of Wisconsin, Madison
Jeanne Buckeye  University of St. Thomas, Minnesota
John Denniston  St. Vincent de Paul Society of San Mateo and DSPT COF
Kathy Edin  Johns Hopkins University
Lonnie Berger  University of Wisconsin, Madison
Michael Sweeney  DSPT President
Michelle Jackson  Stanford University
Patricio Solis  Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)
Patrick Brennan  DSPT College of Fellows and University of Villanova
Rene Zentero  University of Texas
Roberto Blancarte  El Colegio de Mexico
Roberto Cortes  El Colegio de Mexico
Ron Austin  DSPT College of Fellows
Sandra Kuntz Flicker  El Colegio de Mexico
Sheldon Danzinger  Russell Sage Foundation
Timothy Smeeding  University of Wisconsin, Madison
Tomas Jimenez  Stanford University
Will Lightbourne  Calif. Department of Social Services

About the Mazatlán Forum

The Mazatlán Forum is an annual event that addresses overlapping economic, political and social issues in the United States and Mexico. Since 2013, the Mazatlán Forum has attracted influential thought-leaders from around the world to discuss ideas about and solutions to some of the planet’s most pressing issues. More information about the Mazatlán Forum can be found at http://mazatlanforum.com

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Media Note: For more information and interviews with David B. Grusky, Director of the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality or any of the Forum attendees, please contact Ivan Becerra: (415) 392-1000.