

UUSC & UUA ENDORSE WENDY'S BOYCOTT LED BY THE COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS

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FROM SHELLY KOO

On June 22, The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) joined the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and other organizations to protest Wendy's failure to sign the Fair Food Program. Wendy's is the last U.S. fast food chain refusing to guarantee an extra penny-per-pound in pay, along with more dignified working conditions for Florida farmworkers.



Led by President and CEO Bill Schulz, more than 50 UUSC protesters joined the UUA, Alliance for Fair Food, the Food Justice Ministry, Fair Food Ohio, and the Justice Action Ministry of the First UU Church of Columbus, Ohio in picketing a Wendy's restaurant in downtown Columbus, Ohio, coinciding with the UUA General Assembly held at the nearby Greater Columbus Convention Center. The action was followed by a petition delivery with close to 10,000 signatures to Wendy's corporate headquarters, just next door to Columbus in Dublin, OH. UUSC's Associate Director for Justice-Building Pamela Sparr noted, "Consumer action is the best tool we have now to pressure management to do the right thing."

"With this program, the women who pick tomatoes to support their families no longer have to leave their dignity in the tomato fields," said farmworker leader Nely Rodriguez, "Women now have a voice and a way to stop the harassment and abuse that has happened for too long."^[1]

Even today, Wendy's still refuses to sign onto the Fair Food Program. Here are things you can do to pressure them to join the country's other fast food restaurant chains:

- **JOIN THE BOYCOTT**: If you haven't added your name to people refusing to patronize Wendy's until they sign the Fair Food Pledge, please do it today. We need as many people as possible to join the boycott.
- **READ MORE ABOUT UUSC's CONTINUING EFFORTS TO PRESSURE WENDY'S TO SIGN THE PLEDGE**: Visit our webpages for the latest news on our work to support the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and end the exploitation of Florida farmworkers.
- Find more resources for action at the CIW's website.

McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, and Subway have all joined the Fair Food Program, which means that Wendy's unfairly profits from a cost advantage over its competitors. Another way that Wendy's has avoided responsibility is by moving to a new tomato supplier based in Mexico.

In April the Coalition of Immokalee Workers called for a "Month of Outrage" following an [exposé in Harper's Magazine](#) that linked Wendy's to Bioparques, an infamous Mexican tomato company prosecuted for slavery in 2013. According to the article, "Bioparques workers who spoke to [the Los Angeles] Times...described subhuman conditions, with workers forced to work without pay, trapped for months at a time in scorpion-infested camps, often without beds, fed on scraps, and beaten when they tried to quit."^[2] Instead of purchasing from the Florida tomato industry, which is setting new standards in human rights for farmworkers, Wendy's has moved their purchasing power to a company rife with wage theft, sexual harassment, and child labor.

Florida farmworkers typically are paid at a rate of around 50 cents per 32 pound bucket of tomatoes (Less than 2 cents a pound). An extra penny per pound in a farmworker's paycheck can mean up to an extra \$100 a week, raising their annual wages for their backbreaking labor from about \$10,000 a year up to \$17,000 – a significant increase, but still below the U.S. Federal Poverty Level for a family of three. In comparison, Bioparques workers earn between \$8 and \$12 a day.

Hannah Hafter, UUSC's Senior Program Leader for Activism, who helped organize UUSC's participation in the Columbus rally, is pleased with efforts to date, but believes there is much still to be done. "The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has had unprecedented success in improving wages and working conditions for farmworkers in Florida. Yet rather than support the Fair Food Program, Wendy's has started to buy tomatoes from a company in Mexico known for slavery-like conditions for workers. We are proud to be in solidarity with farmworkers by endorsing the Wendy's Boycott, and we consider the rally at General Assembly and the petition delivery to Wendy's headquarters only the beginning."