

Farmworker Justice: Select Tools for Allies of the Coalition of  
Immokalee Workers

February 2007

Produced by  
Kathleen Wood and Kate Mitchell  
Emerson National Hunger Fellows 2006-2007

# Farmworker Justice: Select Tools for Allies of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

## Table of Contents

1. Timeline of Farmworker Organizing in Immokalee: History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies
2. Brief Timeline of CIW Tours and Mini-Tours
3. Brief Timeline of CIW Hunger Strikes and Work Strikes
4. Brief Timeline of CIW Anti-Slavery Work
5. Brief Timeline of Faith Ally Partnership with the CIW
6. Facts and Figures on Farmworkers in the United States
7. Quiz: The True Tale of Your Tomato
8. “With These Hands” CIW Video: Questions for Reflection
9. How We Can Be Faithful Consumers
10. Stations of the Cross: CIW Farmworkers Journey Toward Justice
11. Advent Reflections on the CIW’s Campaign for Fair Food
12. In Our Words: Prayers from CIW Members and Allies
13. Religious Leaders Statements in Support of CIW’s McDonald’s Campaign
14. Catholic Leaders Statements in Support of CIW’s McDonald’s Campaign
15. Meditating on The Journey: Collected Prayers

## Introduction

In their work against hunger and poverty in the United States, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida (IA) focus on achieving long-term solutions to farmworkers' needs. In order to carry out this mission, a fundamental component of their work is educating people—from Southwest Florida religious congregations to fast-food consumers across the country—about the working and living conditions of migrant farmworkers in Florida. The resources contained here are intended to assist in this purpose. They collectively invite potential allies to explore the deep-seeded causes of farmworker poverty and to consider ways they may support the CIW's work for farmworker justice. Individually, each document aims to connect with the reader uniquely, whether as a consumer, as a person of faith, or as a student.

The first section of the report includes general educational pieces that follow a chronology toward a deeper understanding of the CIW's movement. It begins with a comprehensive timeline about the CIW's history, including four shorter timelines about particular components of the CIW's work. Then, we include a resource sheet about current farmworker wages and conditions, a quiz to test one's knowledge about how tomatoes are picked, and a companion tool to the CIW's "With These Hands" video with reflection questions for groups. Section two of the report includes materials specifically for people of faith. The first piece links spirituality and religious morality with recognizing the plight of farmworkers who harvest our food. Following that are two Christian, non-denominational reflections: a CIW Stations of the Cross and CIW Advent Season meditations. The final components of the report include prayers written by CIW members and allies, compiled statements of support by various religious organizations, and various prayers related to farmworker justice.

Creating and sustaining a social change movement to end hunger and poverty in the United States requires us to recognize that hunger is the absence of food and yet, paradoxically, not principally about food. Although it is imperative that we meet the immediate needs of those who are denied their human rights to food and adequate shelter, we must actively seek out, support, and expand initiatives, like the CIW, that are working to eliminate the need for charity as an institution. Furthermore, through these resources, we draw attention to the CIW's method of incorporating "allies," non-farmworkers working in solidarity with them, into its model of being a worker-led movement. Through this continual process of nationwide outreach, a 3000-member farmworker organization continues to create systemic change and a fundamental shift in the balance of power in the U.S. agricultural industry. The CIW affirms that allies are essential to achieving its overarching goal of farmworker dignity and justice, and to that end, we offer these resources to progress the shared vision of the CIW and its allies.

Kate Mitchell and Kathleen Wood  
Emerson National Hunger Fellows, 2006-2007

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

#### **1980s-1990s**

**1980s-early 1990s:** Civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador continue to ravish the country. Many citizens are displaced and flee to other countries, and some arrive in South FL where they join the labor force as farm workers.

**1991:** Jean Bernard Aristide is democratically elected to serve as president of Haiti. Shortly thereafter, he is overthrown by a coup. The political unrest in Haiti forces thousands to seek refugee outside the country, and many arrive on FL shores. Among them are community leaders fleeing political persecution.

**1993:** Immokalee farmworkers begin meeting to discuss problems they face while working. Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church offers them space and support to do early organizing work. The group calls itself the Southwest Florida Farmworker's Project and forms three committees representing the three largest ethnic communities working in the fields: Mexicans, Guatemalans, and Haitians. Workers identify their greatest concerns as low wages, violence in the workplace, wage theft, and lack of respect by employers.

Many of these founding CIW members bring with them experience in grassroots organizing and political engagement. These strategies, including popular education, leadership development, and protest actions, continue to root the CIW's work.

During this year, members of the CIW begin to pool their money to purchase products and sell them on the street at a fair price. At the end of the year, participating members receive dividends based on a formula consisting of how much they put toward the collective sum and the amount of work they do for the sales. When the CIW becomes a non-profit organization in 1996, the scheme becomes a formal cooperative.

**1994:** During its first season of challenging crew leaders for underpaying or refusing to pay workers, the Southwest FL Farmworkers' Project recoups over \$100,000 in unpaid wages for Immokalee workers.

**November 1995:** Pacific Tomato Growers, one of the largest employers in the area, announces a plan to lower workers' hourly wage by about 30%, from 4.25/hr to 3.85/hr. The workers call their first strike, and over 3,000 farmworkers refuse to work for one week, including citrus pickers acting in solidarity. In response, Pacific Tomato announces it will, instead, increase the hourly rate paid to workers to \$5.25.

**1996:** The Southwest FL Farmworker's Project forms its own board, by-laws, and staff and gains non-profit status. The group becomes the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and begins to operate out of an office off Main Street in Immokalee.

**December 1996:** A 16-year-old Guatemalan worker comes to the CIW office after being beaten by his boss for taking a drink of water while working. The Coalition organizes the "March Against Violence," in which five hundred workers march to the house of the

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

contractor who beat the boy. They hold up the boy's bloody shirt and shout "*Golpear a uno es golpear a todos.*" (*An injury to one is an injury to all.*) Following the march, nobody goes to work for that contractor for two weeks.

**1997:** Federal prosecutors charge two agricultural employers with slavery, extortion, and illegal firearm possession and sentence them to 15 years in federal prison. The case, *US v. Flores*, is uncovered with the help of CIW member, Julia Gabriel. During the five-year investigation led by escaped workers and the CIW, the employers hold over 400 men and women in debt bondage in Florida and South Carolina.

**1997-2000:** The CIW formulates an overarching campaign theme that captures the essence of the workers' struggle: *Campaign for Dignity, Dialogue, and a Living Wage*

**December 1997-January 1998:** Six members of the CIW undertake a hunger strike to demand dialogue with the growers. Since farmworkers do not have the right to organize, the CIW employs a different strategy. It organizes community-wide strikes with the goal of achieving non-contractual agreements with growers, held in place because of a more balanced power structure between growers and workers.

The hunger strike lasts 30 days. It is broken with the intervention of Former President Jimmy Carter. He asks the strikers to eat and the growers to dialogue with workers, but the growers (except Gargiulio Inc.) refuse.

*"I am concerned that the relevant facts and the appropriate compensation cannot be agreed upon unless there are direct talks between employers and workers on this issue. Open discussions between employers and employees' representatives are a fundamental tenet of acceptable labor relations, in all industries." --Former President Jimmy Carter, January 16, 1998*

Gargiulio Inc., the largest tomato grower in FL, is the only grower to meet with the CIW following the strike and increases bucket price from 40 cents to 50 cents.

The hunger strike marks the first time the CIW approaches allies to support them, including politicians, students, and particularly, people of faith. The strike ends with a Catholic mass led by Bishop Nevins of the Southwest Florida Diocese.

**1998:** Coming together after the hunger strike, Southwest FL clergy and people of faith form Religious Leaders Concerned with a mission to educate the religious community about the farmworkers' plight (a precursor to Interfaith Action of SW FL). Religious Leaders Concerned hosts people of faith for pilgrimages to Immokalee and educational workshops through the coming years.

**1998:** While on the gubernatorial campaign trail, former-Gov. Jeb Bush comes to Immokalee and promises changes for farmworkers in FL. After the hunger strike, he brokers a 5-cent increase across the industry, but growers remain unwilling to meet directly with workers.

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

**1998:** The U.S. Government creates a Worker Exploitation Taskforce, catalyzed by public awareness of modern-day slavery and trafficking, including the *US v. Flores* case.

**1998:** The case, *US v. Cardena*, involving a sexual slavery ring in West Palm Beach, FL, goes to court. Julia Gabriel, CIW leader, assists federal prosecutors with the case.

**1999:** First letter is sent to Taco Bell directly connecting the company—as a large tomato buyer—to the farmworkers’ struggle for improved wages and working conditions.

**October 28, 1999:** Lucas Benitez receives *Rolling Stone Magazine’s* Brick Award for outstanding young leader.

**December 13-15, 1999:** Hundreds of farmworkers participate in a work stoppage to demand the bucket rate be raised from 45 cents to 75 cents. In addition to the protest, the CIW collects more than 1,700 signatures on a petition asking local growers to negotiate with the workers who pick their tomatoes.

### **2000**

**February 19-March 4, 2000:** The CIW engages FL citizens in its struggle for better wages and treatment in the form of a peaceful demonstration that spans the state. The March for Dignity, Dialogue, and a Fair Wage crosses FL from Fort Myers to Orlando on a 230-mile, 15-day trek. It ends at the FL Fruit and Vegetable Association’s headquarters (the FL growers’ primary lobbying arm). Youth and student participants in the event generate ideas for a student organization directed specifically at allying youth with farmworkers in the CIW’s work, and thus, they form the Student Farmworker Alliance. Churches along the route host farmworkers for meals and lodging, and people of faith, including Bishop Nevins, join the march.

**2000:** Julia Gabriel receives National Organization of Women’s Courage Award for her work in ending modern-day slavery in the fields.

**May 2000:** The Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutes a SW Florida employer on slavery charges and sentences him to three years in federal prison in *U.S. v. Cuello*. He had held more than 30 tomato pickers in two trailers in the isolated swampland west of Immokalee, keeping them under constant watch. The workers sought help from the CIW and the police, and the CIW worked with the DOJ on the ensuing investigation.

**October 21-22, 2000:** Farmworkers from across the state gather at the state capitol to hold a two-day fast and vigil, focusing public attention on Governor Bush’s refusal to facilitate communication between workers and employers in the agriculture industry. More than 40 farmworkers and supporters participate in the fast, which ends on Sunday evening with prayers and an invocation led by local religious leaders. Florida media outlets reported favorably on the event:

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

*“Everyone—including growers, consumers, news outlets, the governor and other politicians—should be ashamed. Here we are in 2000 still openly discounting the worth of one of our most important work forces.” --Bill Maxwell, St. Petersburg Times*

**October 28, 2000:** The slavery cases uncovered by the CIW with the FBI and U.S. Department of Justice help bring about the first anti-slavery legislation since 1865. *The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* criminalizes trafficking with respect to slavery. It also makes housing, education, health care, job training, and other federally-funded social service programs available to victims of human trafficking.

### **2001**

**2001:** Freedom Network (USA) is co-founded by the CIW and other non-governmental organizations committed to fighting modern-day slavery in the U.S. A coalition of 25, it advocates for the rights of U. S. trafficking survivors. In 2003, the CIW co-founds the national Freedom Network Institute on Human Trafficking, which trains law enforcement and NGOs on how to identify and assist workers held against their will.

**January 13-14, 2001:** Farmworker groups throughout the state organize the March for Farmworker Justice to include farm laborers from various sectors of the FL agricultural industry. The march begins in the small farming community of Quincy and ends 22 miles later at the Governor’s mansion in Tallahassee. Over 300 participants call on the governor to organize labor talks between farmworkers and growers, but their demands are met by Bush’s refusal to be involved in a private business dispute.

**Winter 2001:** The march from Quincy to Tallahassee solidifies Student Farmworker Alliance as a national, student-led organization working with the CIW. Over 30 students from across the state participate in the march, gathering more than 1,500 signatures on a petition to deliver to the governor asking for him to engage in the needs of farmworkers.

**January 22, 2001:** On Martin Luther King Day, the CIW officially threatens a nationwide Taco Bell boycott outside a Taco Bell in Ft. Myers, FL.

**February 2001:** The Coalition assists the DOJ in the investigation of Jose Tecum. Tecum receives a nine-year prison sentence for felony counts, including kidnapping and slavery. He is found guilty of illegally smuggling a young woman from Guatemala, keeping her captive, sexually abusing her, and forcing her to work in tomato fields.

**February- March 2001:** CIW organizes a month of protests. Over five weekends in cities across the state of FL, the CIW facilitates presentations about farmworker wages and the campaign with Taco Bell, followed by a protest at a Taco Bell restaurant. Cities include Fort Myers, Gainesville, Sarasota, Tampa, and Miami.

**Spring 2001:** Following the march in Tallahassee, the CIW undertakes an internal discernment process to shape future strategies of the organization. Farmworker leaders recognize that growers will not respond to public pressure because of their position in the market. A CIW analysis concludes that tomato purchasers have become increasingly

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

concentrated in the hands of a few large buyers in the fast-food industry and major super market chains; corporations such as Yum! Brands, McDonalds, and Walmart create artificially low prices in the tomato industry by leveraging their volume purchases to extract cheap tomatoes from growers. Not in the position to control prices in production, the growers pass the cut in their profits to farmworkers in the form of sub-poverty wages.

**April 1, 2001:** The CIW announces the Taco Bell boycott in Orlando, FL in front of the FL Fruit and Vegetable Association. As an April Fool's Day action, the CIW and allies present Taco Bell with the "Golden Bucket Award" for its dedication to improving the wages and conditions of workers.

The Taco Bell boycott demands are:

- Convene a three-part dialogue between representatives of Taco Bell, its FL tomato suppliers, and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to discuss solutions to the problems farmworkers face in FL's fields.
- Contribute to an immediate increase in farmworker wages through a raise in the per pound rate Taco Bell pays for tomatoes from its FL suppliers.
- Join with the CIW and tomato industry representatives in drafting wage and working conditions standards to be required of all Taco Bell tomato suppliers. Such standards would require upholding farmworkers' fundamental labor rights, including the rights to a living wage, overtime pay, and ability to organize without fear of retaliation.

**April 2001:** The Presbyterian Church USA launches "The Campaign for Fair Food" in partnership with the CIW.

**May 1, 2001:** National Day of Actions ("May Day Actions"): The CIW calls for actions across the country in front of Taco Bell restaurants in honor of International Workers' Day, and more than 40 communities organize events. SFA coordinates its first mass action; students protest in front of 30 Taco Bell restaurants across 12 Florida cities.

*"May Day this year in FL was a reminder that no corporation exists without the goodwill of its customers and that goodwill is not unconditional. On May Day this year in FL, consumers declared loud and clear that Taco Bell's fate is in the consumers' hands, and until Taco Bell acknowledges that the farmworkers' struggle is Taco Bell's problem, business will be anything but usual." --CIW website, May 2001*

**June 2001:** CIW begins planning its first national tour, titled "Taco Bell Truth Tour," to educate consumers about the farmworkers' struggle in FL. The tour is scheduled for September 13<sup>th</sup>, and over 100 Immokalee workers plan to participate. The CIW and allies contact communities across the country, and nearly 50 boycott-support committees form.

**Summer 2001:** SFA continues to expand its national base. Students across the country create the "Boot the Bell" campaign to remove Taco Bell from campuses nationwide. A Taco Bell press release from September 1999 declares 18-23 year olds as its new target market. In response, SFA counters that youth are not mindless consumers and "that

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

human rights and the dignity of labor also enter into our thinking when we decide where to spend our money" (CIW Web site).

**July 2001:** The General Synod of the United Church of Christ votes to support the boycott, becoming the first national religious body to endorse the boycott.

**September 2001:** The CIW sends a fourth letter to Taco Bell informing them of the upcoming tour to its headquarters in California.

**September 12, 2001:** CIW postpones tour in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> national tragedy.

**October 2001:** A smaller CIW delegation embarks on a "mini-tour" following the proposed path of the Taco Bell Truth Tour before September 11<sup>th</sup>. The group of ten crosses the country to meet supporters in Atlanta, GA; South Bend, IN; Chicago, IL; Madison, WI; Denver, CO; Salt Lake City, UT; San Francisco, Los Angeles and Irvine, CA; Albuquerque, NM; and Oklahoma City, OK.

## **2002**

**February 28-March 11, 2002:** Two buses with more than 90 farmworkers, students, and allies participate in the first Taco Bell Truth Tour. The itinerary includes 15 cities in 17 days with Taco Bell protests, presentations, and more, culminating in Los Angeles and Irvine, CA. While in Los Angeles, the CIW hosts a one-day conference titled "Rise Up," drawing linkages between the Taco Bell boycott and the anti-sweatshop movement. On the final day of the tour in Irvine, over a thousand people join the workers in a four-mile march to Taco Bell Headquarters. Taco Bell calls CIW just before the Truth Tour begins to ask CIW to cancel the tour in exchange for a meeting. The CIW declines to cancel the tour but agrees to meet with Taco Bell representatives upon arrival in Irvine. Concurrently with the protest outside headquarters, CIW representatives meet with Taco Bell executives for the first time, but no significant breakthroughs occur.

**Spring 2002:** Duke becomes the first university to successfully remove Taco Bell products from shelves on its campus as part of the SFA Boot the Bell campaign.

**May 2002:** During Yum Brands' shareholder meeting, CIW and religious allies hold a vigil outside the meeting building.

**July 2002:** Two FL-based agricultural employers are convicted in federal court on slavery, extortion, and weapons charges. The case comes to trial following a two-year investigation by the CIW in cooperation with the Department of Justice. Defendants Ramiro and Juan Ramos were contractors near Lake Placid, FL overseeing field operations with over 700 farmworkers. Immigrants were transported from Mexico to FL through arrangements made by the Ramos brothers and worked until they had paid off an imposed "transportation debt." Witnesses in the case and undercover CIW investigators testified that the defendants threatened violence if workers attempted to escape, forced

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

individuals to work long hours without overtime pay and held people in substandard living conditions. In March 2004, Ramiro and Juan were each sentenced to 15 years in prison, fined \$20,000 and ordered to forfeit personal property worth over \$3 million.

**June 2002:** The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) votes to support the boycott.

**October 2002:** Farmworkers embark on the Northeast Mini Tour, stopping in cities along the East Coast from Washington D.C. to Boston. The group of ten speaks with students at schools, including Brown University, Boston University and Smith College. Events include a shared lecture with historian Howard Zinn at Harvard University, solidarity actions with striking SEIU janitors in Boston, and protests at dozens of Taco Bell restaurants attended by local allies throughout the 17-day journey.

**October 30- November 1, 2002:** SFA calls for Scary Days of Action at Taco Bell restaurants in solidarity with the protests opposing the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Ministerial in Quito, Ecuador. CIW contributes its voice to the issue by drawing parallels between the economic burden impressed upon the poor by the FTAA and the exploitation of cheap farm labor by large U.S. corporations such as Taco Bell.

### **2003**

**February 24-March 5, 2003:** The Second Taco Bell Truth Tour and Hunger Strike occurs. The tour travels to Taco Bell's headquarters in Irvine, CA where 50 farmworkers and allies begin a 10-day hunger strike. During the strike, the CIW emphasizes the lack of transparency in Taco Bell's supply chain with the rhetorical question: "Can Taco Bell guarantee its customers that the tomatoes in its tacos are not picked by forced labor?" On the fifth day, over 1000 allies join the strikers in front of Taco Bell headquarters.

The following religious bodies and leaders write public letters, imploring Taco Bell to meet with the CIW:

- The National Council of Churches of Christ Executive Board and Leadership
- His Eminence Cardinal Roger Mahoney, Archbishop of Los Angeles
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ
- Unitarian Universalist Service Association
- National Farm Worker Ministry

**March 5, 2003:** Religious leaders urge strikers to end the fast, promising to continue the campaign from this point forward. Honoring Ash Wednesday, the workers and religious leaders end the fast by breaking bread together.

*"I encourage Catholics to stand with you by fasting during lent as a sign of solidarity with you and in prayer that you soon see a successful conclusion to this campaign. As a sign of goodwill, I encourage the leadership of Taco Bell to meet with you in the coming days to seek a fair and peaceful solution to the dispute."*

–Archbishop of Los Angeles Cardinal Mahoney's letter of support

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

*“So today, though our fast has ended, we are happy, because—to paraphrase Dr. King—we have seen the coming of a better day. Throughout history, nonviolent protest has served to reveal the true character of the oppressor, and our hunger strike has been no exception. Over the past 10 days, Taco Bell has rejected pastors bearing a message of dialogue, physicians bearing a message of concern for our health, the mayor of Irvine, offering his support for a solution to this dispute, and tens of thousands of people across the country who in one form or another have been moved by the hunger strike to demand justice of Taco Bell. With each rejection, these good people felt the sting of Taco Bell’s disdain, the sting we have felt for nearly two years now. So though our fast has ended, today our boycott is stronger than ever.”*

-Gerardo Reyes Chavez, CIW leader

**Spring 2003:** A CIW ally works with a Midwest-based fair trade coffee company to make a special blend for the CIW’s campaign with Taco Bell. For each “Un Centavo Mas” (*A Penny More*) fair trade coffee bag sold, one dollar is donated to the CIW.

**April 12-13, 2003:** Thirty-four CIW members march against the war in Iraq as part of a mobilization in Washington, DC. The following day, the Latin American Solidarity Coalition leads a “March of Shame” across Washington DC with multiple protest stops, one of which is a Taco Bell restaurant. Over 3,000 people participate in the “March of Shame.”

**April 21, 2003:** *The New Yorker Magazine* publishes John Bowe’s article, “Nobodies: American Slaves Today,” which documents the CIW’s actions to infiltrate, investigate, expose, and prosecute slavery rings in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice and FBI.

**May 14, 2003:** The Presbyterian Church (USA) brokers a meeting between YUM Brands Senior Vice President, Jonathan Blum, and representatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers scheduled for the day before Taco Bell’s annual meeting. Discussions are reconvened the following morning, the same day Taco Bell shareholders are scheduled to vote on a resolution in support of tomato pickers. The two-day discussions yield no agreement or progress toward a boycott resolution.

**September 2003:** National Geographic Magazine features the anti-slavery work of the CIW in an article titled “Twenty-first Century Slaves.” Writer Andrew Cockburn describes the Coalition’s efforts to uncover slave trafficking in the United States and expose the invisible presence of abused laborers in the U.S. economy.

**September 25, 2003:** The PBS program “Wide Angle” airs a two-hour special featuring the CIW and documenting slavery in FL’s tomato fields. Directed by Andrew Wolf, the documentary called “Dying to Live” considers the CIW’s work in the context of global human trafficking.

**September 20-October 4, 2003:** Ten “Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides” take place across the country. The Miami route begins in Immokalee. Two CIW members join

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

1,000 immigrant workers in the national Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride that travels to Washington DC to call for increased citizenship for all immigrant workers, full civil rights for immigrants, immigrant family reunification, and protection of immigrants' workplace rights.

**October 2003:** The Texas-sized Mini Tour begins in Tallahassee at the Governor's mansion and stretches through New Orleans, Houston, Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Memphis, Birmingham, and ending in Gainesville, FL. Though the Governor refuses to meet with the 15 tour participants, several hundred students and faith allies gather to show support for the CIW's boycott message.

**October 2003:** Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) General Assembly votes to support the Taco Bell boycott.

**October 2003:** American Friends Service Committee (Quaker) votes to support the Taco Bell boycott.

**November 6, 2003:** National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.'s General Assembly, representing over 45 million members of Christian denominations across the country, votes to support the Taco Bell boycott.

**November 16-18, 2003:** The Root Cause Coalition, founded by the CIW and two grassroots organizations from Miami, organizes a 34-mile march against the 2003 FTAA Ministerial in Miami, linking the work of the CIW to larger global causes of poverty and workers' rights. Over 1000 participants converge in Miami on the final day of the march.

**November 20, 2003:** Three CIW members receive the Robert F. Kennedy International Human Rights Award for their anti-slavery work, marking the first time recipients are U.S.-based human rights defenders.

### **2004**

**February 25-March 10, 2004:** The CIW's Third Truth Tour engages participants in rallies, marches, and letter-writing campaigns in the communities of Taco Bell's corporate executives. CIW and Louisville allies march eight miles from the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to Yum Brands Headquarters for a rally where farmworkers hang their work apparel on Yum's fence and construct a pyramid of 120 tomato buckets to represent the labor contributed by farmworkers to the company's profits. The tour continues to Los Angeles where local supporters join the 80 farmworkers and allies in a three-day, 44-mile march from Los Angeles to Irvine, California, headquarters of Taco Bell. On the last day of the march, over 1,500 allies rally at Taco Bell Headquarters, including celebrities Lila Downs, Boots Riley, and Tom Morello, California State Senator Joe Dunn, and author Eric Schlosser.

**March 15, 2004:** Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former High Commissioner of Human Rights for the UN, and Bishop Hoyt, President of the National Council of Churches, visit Immokalee to release a report by Oxfam America titled "Like

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

Machines in the Fields,” which documents the invisible hand of the retail food industry in suppressing workers’ wages.

**Early Spring 2004:** Students at the University of Notre Dame fast for three days in protest of Taco Bell, catalyzing students at five other universities to continue the action one-by-one, in what becomes known as the “Rolling Student Hunger Strikes.” Students protest Taco Bell’s presence on their campuses, including any contracts with their schools’ athletic teams.

**April 2004:** Presbyterian Church (USA) convenes meeting with CIW and senior management of Yum Brands.

**May 2004:** Talks with YUM Brands reach an impasse.

**May 2004:** Yum Brands announces humane standards for farm animals in its supply chain. The shareholder resolution adopted by the corporation states it will deal only with suppliers whose animals are “provide(d) an environment that is free from cruelty, abuse and neglect.” CIW asks Yum Brands to commit to improving working conditions and wages of farmworkers in its supply chain, as well.

**May 4, 2004:** The United Methodist Church, with over 8 million members, votes to support the Taco Bell Boycott, a feat that has not occurred since the United Farm Workers’ (UFW) grape and lettuce boycott in the 1980s.

**May 15, 2003:** A shareholder resolution calls on Yum Brands, Inc. to provide comprehensive reporting on labor conditions within its supply chain. The resolution, filed by the United Church of Christ (UCC) Pension Boards, Oxfam, and other institutional investors, garnered 39% of Yum Brands shareholders’ vote in favor of supporting the changes called for by the CIW. Outside the meeting at Yum’s headquarters and in communities across the country, hundreds of farmworkers and CIW members fast as a symbol of commitment to the boycott.

**Summer 2004:** Yum sends the CIW a check for \$100,000, asserting that it would meet the farmworkers’ demand for an extra penny per pound for the 2003-2004 picking season. The Coalition immediately returns the check, calling it a public relations strategy and not a viable solution. The check does not increase wages nor address the CIW’s demands for a code of conduct and a place at the negotiating table for farmworkers, both of which would secure systemic change and protection of worker’s human rights.

**Summer 2004:** Yum Brands begins an active public relations campaign in attempt to curb growing support for the boycott. Some boycott participants receive letters from Yum intended to dissuade them from supporting the Coalition’s campaign.

**September - October 2004:** Students at UCLA successfully remove a high-grossing Taco Bell from their campus in support of the boycott. The event marks an important victory in the Boot the Bell campaign, considering the school’s proximity to Taco Bell’s

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

headquarters. Yum Brands' makes concerted efforts to protect the contract, and the ultimate vote positions students against the administration and the University's business interests. Nevertheless, the final decision favors solidarity with farmworkers.

**October 14-26, 2004:** The Coalition travels to the Pacific Northwest visiting Seattle, Portland, Olympia, Boise, and smaller rural communities with large farmworker populations. The group of seven meets SEIU's International President Andrew Stern, students from various Universities, and the Honorable Mary Robinson who addresses the farmworkers' struggle in a lecture at Boise State University (BSU). In the tour's final event, the CIW speaks to BSU's faculty assembly whose council votes 17-2 in opposition to Taco Bell's sponsorship of the football arena and its brand presence on campus.

### **2005**

**January 2005:** Intensive educational events begins in Louisville, KY communities in preparation for the "2005 Taco Bell Truth Tour: Bringing It Home." The tour is scheduled to move through the Midwest and culminate in a week of actions in Louisville, KY, including a massive rally with celebrity supporters at the headquarters of Taco Bell's parent company, Yum Brands.

**February 2005:** Taco Bell reaches out through the Carter Center to resume talks with CIW prior to the tour.

**February 14, 2005:** The CIW receives a letter of commendation from FBI Director Robert S. Mueller for its work in several FBI investigations involving the servitude, slavery, and human trafficking of migrant workers. He writes, "You can be proud of your unselfish devotion to the safety of those in your community."

**February 28, 2005:** Taco Bell Truth Tour departs from Immokalee. Tour stops include Montgomery, Atlanta, Nashville, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Lexington, Memphis, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Chicago.

#### *Key events:*

- February 28- March 5: Presentations and events from Immokalee to Louisville
- March 6-13: Week of activities in Louisville, Kentucky
- March 11: "Our World, Our Rights" Conference at University of Louisville
- March 12: Boycott celebration party at Yum Brands in Louisville, KY

**March 3, 2005:** The CIW goes before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Every major U.S.-based human rights group, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, signs an amicus letter in support of CIW's position before the Commission.

**March 8, 2005:** In a joint press conference at Yum Brands headquarters, the CIW and Yum Brands announce an historic resolution. The company agrees to meet all of the CIW's demands, and the Taco Bell boycott ends. During the four-year boycott, allies

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

play a crucial role. Over 100 national organizations and prominent individuals endorse the movement and stand with farmworkers in the struggle.

**April 6, 2005:** *New York Times* publishes an editorial written by author Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*). In his essay titled “A Side Order of Human Rights,” Mr. Schlosser chronicles the Taco Bell boycott resolution, calling it a great achievement for human rights and advising other fast-food companies to join Taco Bell.

**Fall 2005:** CIW representatives visit organizations and activists in Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Norway. In Norway, they meet with the Government Petroleum Fund, the world’s largest public pension fund with significant investments in socially responsible funds. Soon after, Norway announces that re-evaluating its stock in the fast-food industry will be a priority in upholding the country’s commitment to ethical investing.

**October 20, 2005:** Mother Jones Magazines names SFA’s Boot the Bell Campaign its 2005 Campus Activism Victory of the Year, recognizing the thousands of students at universities across the country that participated in the successful Taco Bell boycott.

**October 24, 2005:** Category 3 hurricane Wilma brings 125 mph winds and multiple feet of rain, leaving thousands of workers without power or water. The National Guard and Red Cross distribute food and supplies at the CIW office following the disaster.

**October 26, 2005:** Dr. Arjun Sengupta, United Nations' Independent Expert on Extreme Poverty, visits Immokalee as an extension of his work documenting extreme poverty in the United States.

**November 2, 2005:** For its efforts to transform purchasing practices in the agricultural industry, the Coalition receives the 2005 Business Ethics Network (BENNY) Award.

**December 20, 2005:** The Spanish television station Univision joins the Coalition in Immokalee to distribute toys to over 1,200 children in the community. Among the celebrity guests is Fernando Arau of Univision's morning show "Despierta America."

## **2006**

**March 8, 2006:** The Alliance for Fair Food is launched, encouraging allies of the CIW to continue their engagement in the “Campaign for Fair Food.” The founding members are Presbyterian Church (USA), Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, Student/Farmworker Alliance, and Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida. In its first year, the alliance grows to more than 120 leading human rights and faith organizations and prominent individuals.

**March 18, 2006:** Freedom Network USA honors the CIW at its annual conference with the 2006 Wellstone Award for its work against modern-day slavery.

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

**March 26 – April 4, 2006:** The McDonald's Truth Tour 2006: "The Real Rights Tour" embarks from Immokalee. The CIW takes its demands for real rights for farmworkers to McDonald's headquarters. With three teams traveling different routes, the CIW visits 17 cities throughout the South and Midwest before converging in the Chicago area. Tour highlights include:

- March 31, 2006: National and regional leaders of religious bodies call on their members to pray and meditate that McDonald's Corporation will work with the CIW. The observance coincides with a prayer vigil and peaceful demonstration led by the CIW and religious leaders outside of McDonald's headquarters in Oak Brook, IL
- April 1, 2006: Over 500 people joined the CIW in a march from a McDonald's in the historically Mexican Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago to downtown Chicago and the Rock and Roll McDonald's Restaurant, McDonald's flagship taking up an entire city block.

**April 24, 2006:** Immokalee is the first stop on the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Tour: "A Tour for Social and Economic Justice." Mrs. Ethel Kennedy and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney tour Immokalee and sign letters to McDonald's and Chipotle calling for cooperation with the CIW. The day ends with a mass given by local Catholic priests.

**Summer 2006:** SFA encourages students to present McDonald's managers with a letter describing picking conditions in the restaurant's tomato supply chain.

**June 5-14, 2006:** At the invitation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women, CIW representatives visit Thailand to share their methodology on anti-trafficking and modern-day slavery approaches.

**June 23, 2006:** Delegates from various European countries visit Immokalee as participants in the Justice International Visitor Leadership Program funded by the U.S. State Department.

**August 25, 2006:** A federal jury finds Ronald Robert Evans guilty on charges related to distributing illegal substances and violating federal legislation that protects migrant workers. CIW representatives had gone undercover to investigate charges that Evans recruited African-American males from homeless shelters to pick vegetables in isolated fields and then paid workers in the form of drugs and alcohol. Evidence presented at trial showed that after making deductions for crack, beer, and cigarettes from workers' paychecks, Mr. Evans paid his employees, on average, 30 cents on the dollar.

**September 13-20, 2006:** Six members of the Coalition travel to Denver, where Chipotle is based, to begin educating people about FL farmworkers and CIW's campaign.

**October 18-25, 2006:** Traveling from Immokalee to Chicago, a group of 25 farmworkers and allies participate in the Midwest McDonald's Mini-Tour. Highlights of the tour include a week of educational presentations, a picket outside of McDonald's headquarters, and roaming protests throughout the city and in the Chicago suburbs.

## **TIMELINE OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZING IN IMMOKALEE**

### **History of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Its Allies**

**December 12, 2006:** The General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church endorses the Alliance for Fair Food. As one of four international general program boards of the UMC, the endorsement carries the voice of the largest mainline Christian denomination with 8.6 million members in the United States and over 11 million worldwide.

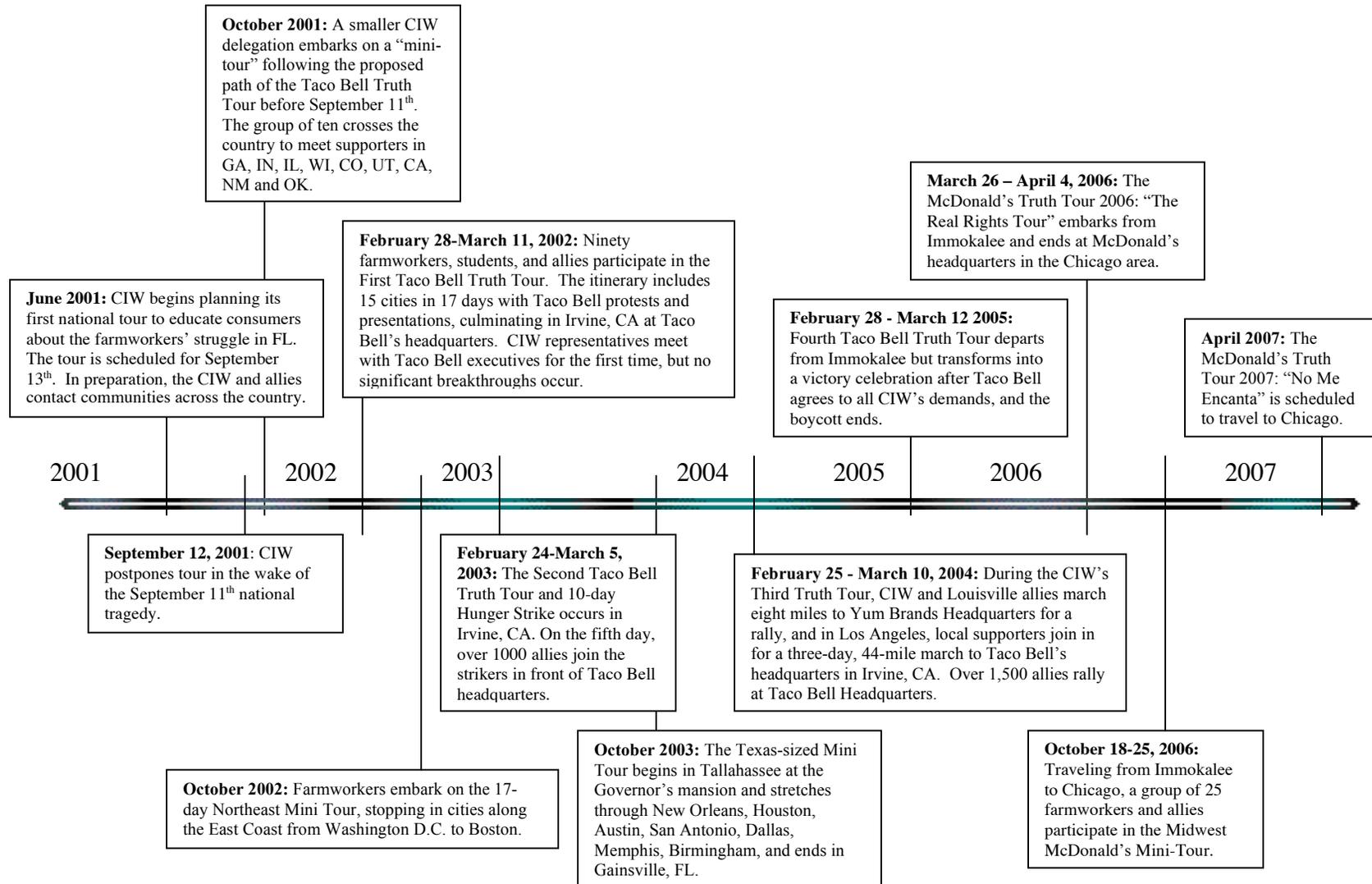
#### **2007**

**January 2007:** CIW begins planning for the Spring 2007 McDonald's Truth Tour.

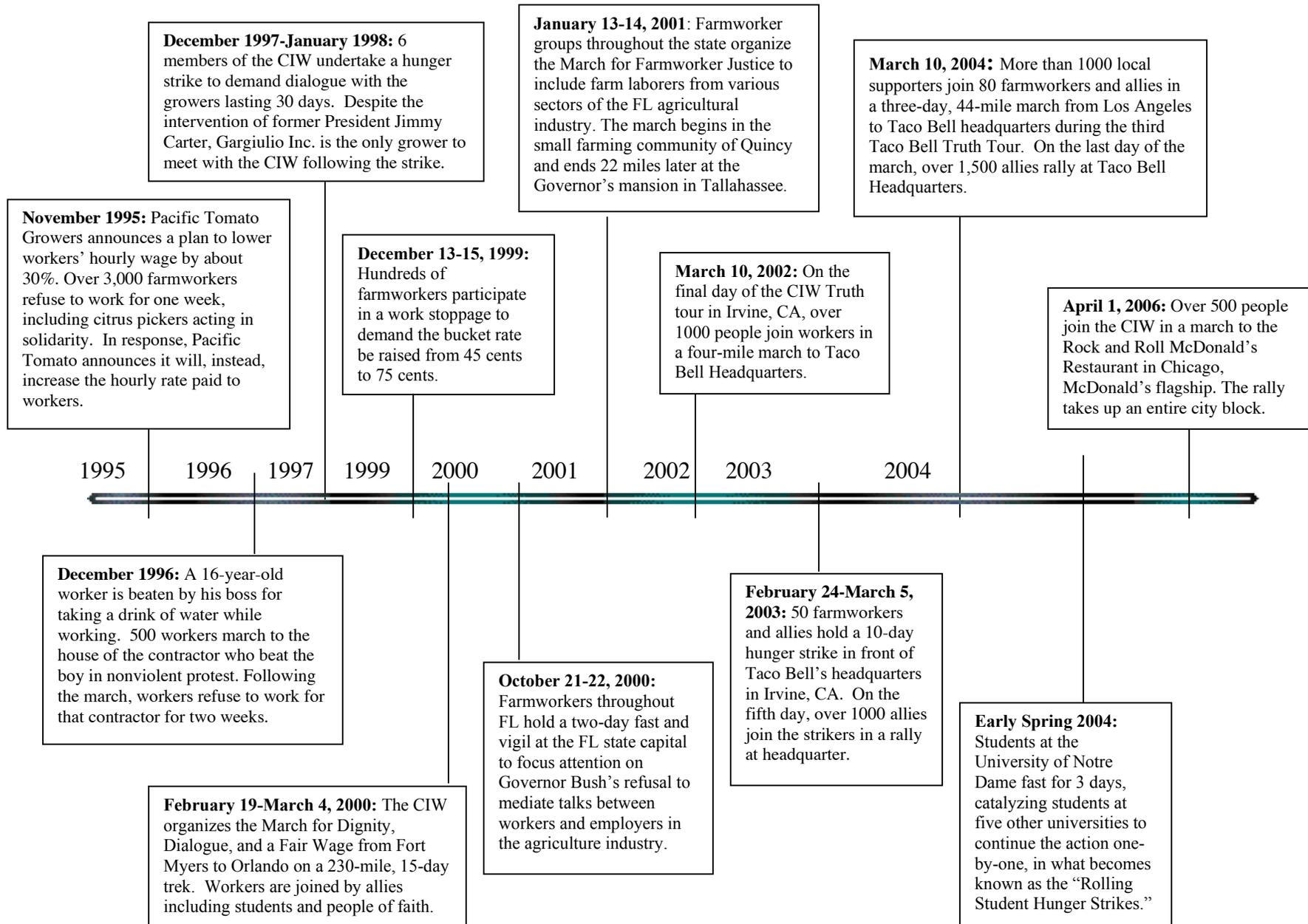
**January 15, 2007:** After 22 years as leader of the Diocese of Venice and one of the first religious leaders to support the CIW, Bishop Nevins celebrates his last mass in Immokalee at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. CIW leader Lucas Benitez tells those in attendance that the farmworkers were blessed by the Bishop's steadfast support throughout his tenure. The Coalition posts on its website this farewell: *"He was our first—and he remained, to his last day in service, our most steadfast—ally from the faith community, and we will always hold him in our hearts."*

A Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new Farmworker Community Center takes place following the mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Local religious leaders of various faith backgrounds attend the event and bless the building. Over 400 people, including supporters from Naples and Ft. Myers and members of the Immokalee farmworker community, attend the ceremony.

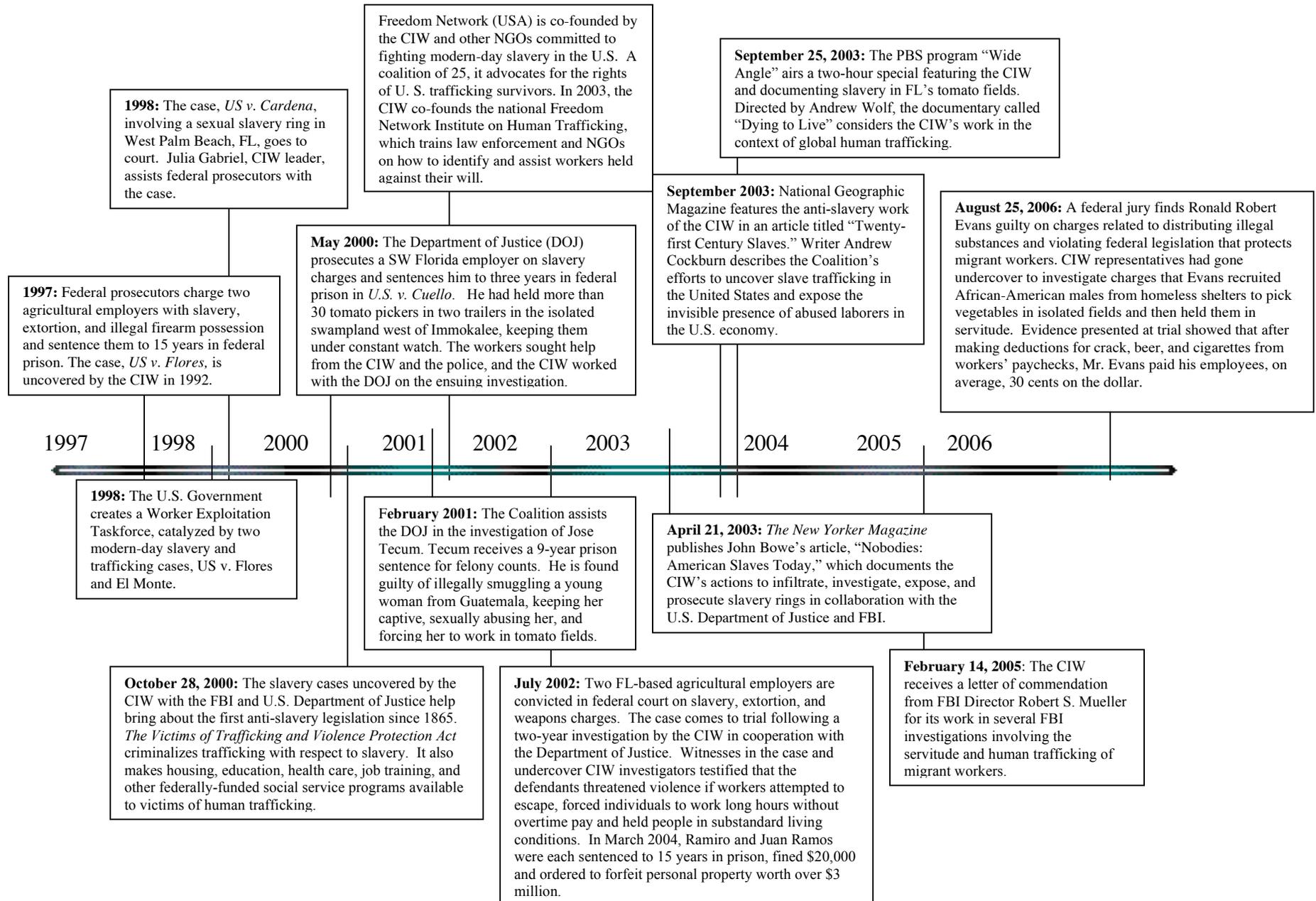
## Brief Timeline of CIW Tours and Mini-Tours



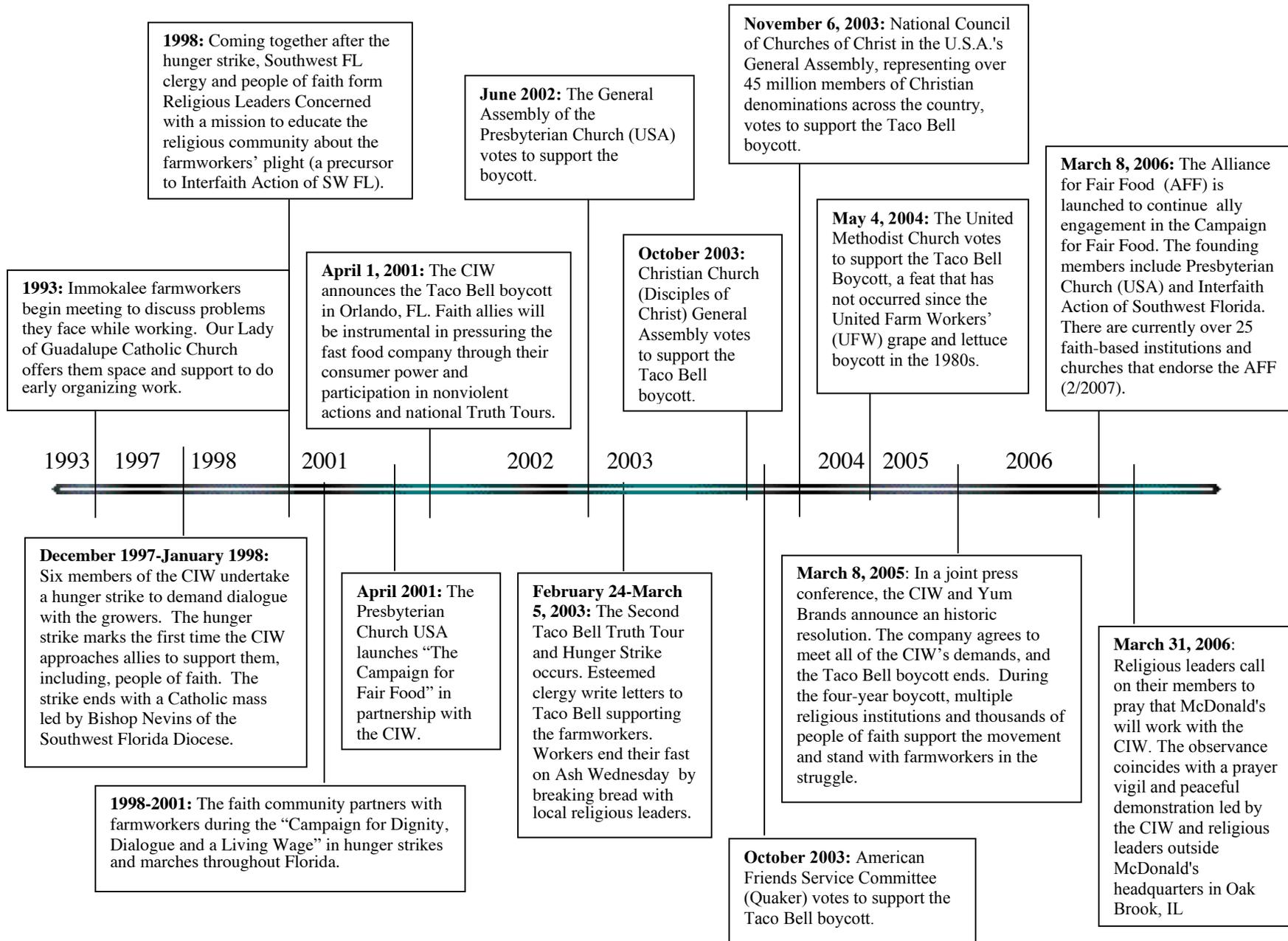
## Brief Timeline of CIW Hunger Strikes and Marches



## Brief Timeline of CIW Anti-Slavery Work



## Brief Timeline of Faith Ally Partnership with the CIW



## Facts and Figures on Farmworkers in the United States

1) In January 2001, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) sent a letter to members of the United States Congress reporting on the stark realities facing the agricultural worker. Detailed facts from the letter, **“The Agricultural Labor Market -- Status and Recommendations,”** include:<sup>i</sup>

- ⇒ ***“Production of fruits and vegetables has increased and global demand for American produce continues to grow, but agricultural worker earnings and working conditions are either stagnant or in decline.”***
- ⇒ ***“Farm workers not only lost ground relative to other workers in the private sector, they lost ground absolutely.”***
- ⇒ ***“Compounding the low wage is the inability of farm workers to find enough employment.”***
- ⇒ ***“Despite the low wages and below poverty annual earnings, farm workers rarely access the safety net intended to cushion the blow of poverty for the working poor.”***
- ⇒ ***“(E)xclusions from legal protections have a negative impact on farm workers and contribute to the factors that discourage farm workers from staying in the industry or others from seeking work in agriculture.”***

2) The National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 1997-1998<sup>ii</sup> provides an account of farm worker salaries and poverty level.<sup>iii</sup> Although the report includes packers and supervisors and excludes H-2A foreign temporary workers (thus, likely inflating the average wages for crop workers and foreign-born workers), it serves as a useful starting point for analyzing farm workers’ circumstances.

	Average Farm Worker Salary, NAWS 1997-1998	2006 Federal Poverty Guidelines, HHS	Living Wage for Immokalee, FL <sup>iv</sup>
Individual income	\$8,000-10,000	\$9,800	\$18,486
Household income	\$10,000-12,500	\$20,000 (family of four)	\$44,993 (family of four)

- ⇒ 50% of farm worker families of four are below the federal poverty level.
- ⇒ Less than 10% of farm workers are covered under an employer’s health insurance plan.
- ⇒ Over 80% of farmworkers do not have any form of health insurance.

## Facts and Figures on Farmworkers in the United States

3) As a result of intentional exclusion under New Deal labor reform measures, including the National Labor Relations Act, The Fair Labor Standards Act, and subsequent legislation and judicial decisions, farmworkers **do not have the right to overtime pay or the right to organize and collectively bargain with their employers.**<sup>v</sup>

4) According to the Congressional Research Service's "Farm Labor Shortages and Immigration Policy" report on March 29, 2006, **"the typical crop worker was estimated to have dropped below 50 cents for every dollar paid to other private sector workers."**<sup>vi</sup>

5) The average day for a farmworker in Immokalee begins before sunrise and ends well after sundown. As a result of substandard wages and housing conditions, farmworkers often must live with 10-12 others in a single trailer.

### Day in the Life of a Farmworker

**4:30 AM:** Wake up. Wait in line to bathe and to prepare lunch in the kitchen.

**5:00 AM:** Walk to the parking lot off Main Street to begin looking for work.

**6:30 AM:** If fortunate, find work with a contractor who will drive you to the fields. The job may be 10 miles or 100 miles away. Load onto old school bus.

**7:30 AM:** Arrive at fields but sit idly while you wait for dew to evaporate from the tomatoes. You are not paid while you wait.

**9:30 AM:** Begin working. Work fast because you must pick *two tons* of tomatoes in order to earn \$50 today

**1:00 PM:** Eat lunch quickly under the smoldering South Florida sun.

**5:00 PM (*sometimes much later, depending on the season*):** Board bus to return to Immokalee.

**6:00 PM:** Arrive in Immokalee and walk home. If it's Friday, cash your check at a convenience store with a check-cashing fee.

**7:00 PM:** Do laundry. Call home. Buy water. Pay bills. Eat supper.

**11:00 PM:** Ignore the leaking roof, the cockroaches, and the noise of others in order to get some rest.

---

<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. 2000. "The Agricultural Labor Market – Status and Recommendations." Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.

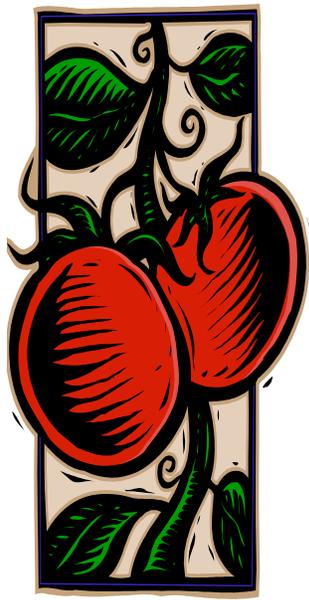
<sup>ii</sup> Although a more recent NAWS 2000-02 puts the average salary for a farm worker between \$10,000 and \$12,500, farmworkers and advocates in Florida support the NAWS 1997-98 figure as more accurate.

<sup>iii</sup> Metha, Kala, Susan M. Gabbard, and Vanessa Barrat, eds. 2005. *Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 1997-1998*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>iv</sup> Living Wage Calculator. *Poverty in America Web Site*. Pennsylvania State University. <<http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu>>.

<sup>v</sup> For greater detail, see Section IV of Oxfam's Report: *Like Machines in the Fields: Workers without Rights in American Agriculture*, March 2004.

<sup>vi</sup> Levine, Linda. 2006. "Farm Labor Shortages and Immigration Policy." *CRS Report for Congress*. Washington D.C.: The Library of Congress.



## The True Tale of the Tomato (what you may not know)

The fields where our fruits and vegetables are grown have been strewn across the country and centralized in the hands of powerful corporations. We are today separated from the process of bringing food to the table and disconnected from people who work the land and suffer under America's agricultural system.

Many of us don't know from where our food comes. Take the quiz below to determine just how much you have to learn about the origin of your tomato.

1. What percentage of farmworkers were migrant workers in 2001-2002?

- a) 26%
- b) 42%
- c) 33%
- d) 15%

2. One out of how many farm workers had total family incomes that were below federal poverty guidelines?

- a) 1 out of 5
- b) 1 out of 4
- c) 1 out of 3
- d) 1 out of 2

3. Farmworkers who harvest tomatoes in Florida earned how much per bucket of tomatoes picked in 1978 compared to 2007?

1978	2007
a) 40-45 cents	40-45 cents
b) 40-45 cents	60-70 cents
c) 50-60 cents	80-90 cents
d) 50-60 cents	85-95 cents

4. Since the early 1990's, how much additional acreage has been dedicated to organic crops due to consumer demand?

- a) 500,000
- b) 700,000
- c) 1.0 million
- d) 1.3 million

5. *Who said: "From the moment you put a piece of bread in your mouth, you are part of the world. Who grew the wheat? Who made the bread? Where did it come from? You are in relationship with all who brought it to the table. We are least separate and most in common when we eat and drink."*

1. (b: 42%) Migrant workers are defined by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) as having traveled at least 75 miles within the previous year to obtain a farm job. Among this type of worker, 35% migrated back-and-forth from a foreign country (mostly Mexico), and 26% traveled within the United States. (NAWS Survey 2001-2002, DOL) Searching and waiting for employment is the reality of farmworkers and contributes to farmworker poverty. For pickers, there is no job security, dependable income, or stability that supports family life.

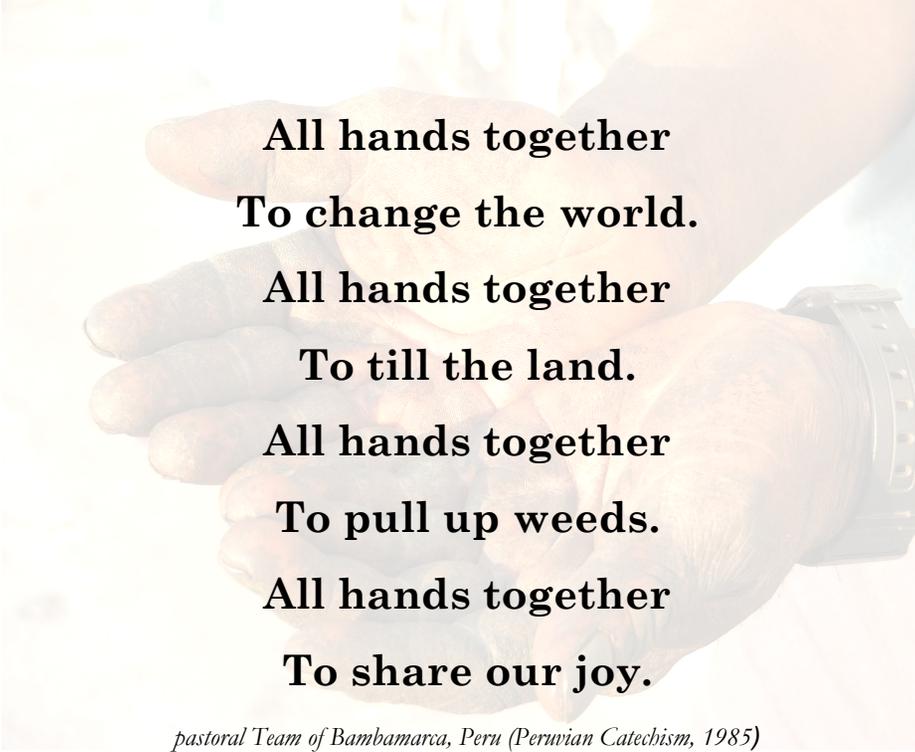
2. (c: 1 out of 3) In 2001-2002, 37% of crop workers had family incomes that fell below 2007 poverty guideline. The word family is deceiving however in the context of farmworkers. About 32% of farmworkers reported being in the United States without a member of their immediate family. Of those workers who live in the United States alone, 87% have a spouse or child living in Mexico. Individual crop workers' income was between \$10,000 and \$12,499 in 2001-2002, again, below the poverty line (NAWS Survey 2001-2002, DOL). And on average, tomato pickers earn even less than farmworkers employed in other crops. A worker picking in tomato fields near Immokalee earns between \$7,500 and \$10,000 per year.

3. (a: 40-45 cents/40-45 cents) Farmworkers earn the same salary today as they did almost 30 years ago. Inflation since 1978 would make a 45-cent bucket of tomatoes worth \$1.39 in 2006 (CPI). Since its inception, the CIW has tirelessly worked to secure a just wage for farmworkers. The penny-per pound agreement reached with Taco Bell in 2005 almost doubles workers wages. For a 32-pound bucket, pickers can earn between 72 to 77 cents for each bucket they pick. However, this only applies to tomatoes picked for Taco Bell, which is a fraction of all tomatoes grown in Florida.

4. (d: 1.3 million) American consumers are thinking more carefully about where their food comes from and how it is grown. Yet, the decision to buy local and organic produce should include a reflection on *who* picked it. Shopping with a conscience means also considering the human price of how fruits and vegetables arrive on our tables.

5. Thomas Merten, "Living Bread."

**“With these Hands” CIW Video:  
Questions for Reflection**



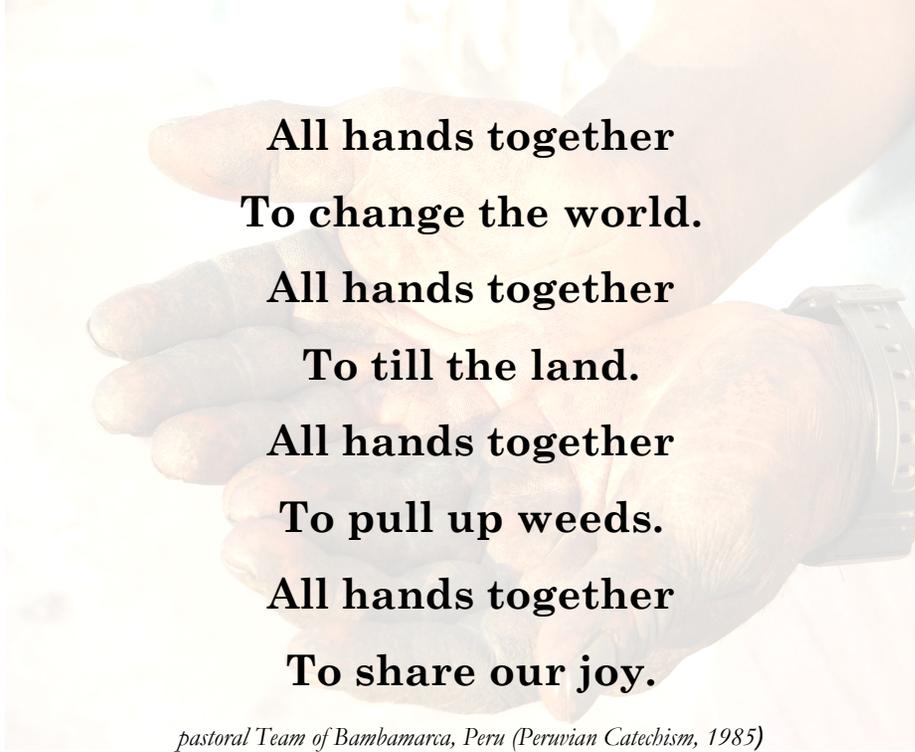
**All hands together  
To change the world.  
All hands together  
To till the land.  
All hands together  
To pull up weeds.  
All hands together  
To share our joy.**

*pastoral Team of Bambamarca, Peru (Peruvian Catechism, 1985)*

**While watching the CIW video “With these Hands,” reflect on the following questions:**

- 1. Why present the story of farmworkers through images of their hands?**
- 2. What do the hands reveal about the history behind them?**
- 3. Look at our own hands. How are they similar/different than those you observed in the video?**
- 4. How can our hands join with the hands of farmworkers in order to build a more just world?**

**“With these Hands” CIW Video:  
Questions for Reflection**



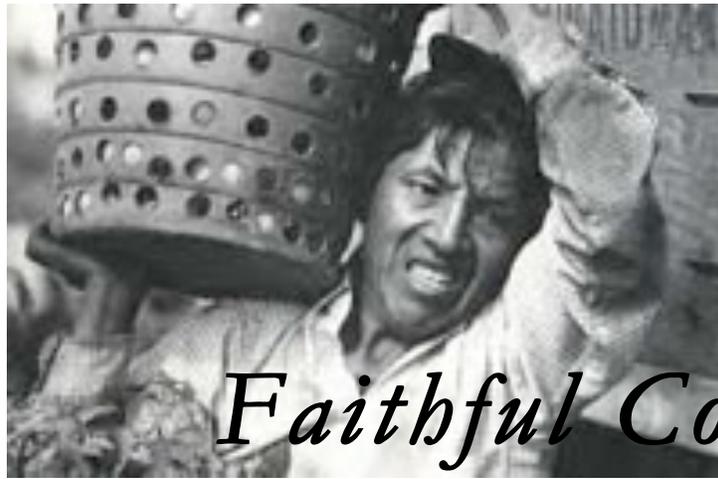
**All hands together  
To change the world.  
All hands together  
To till the land.  
All hands together  
To pull up weeds.  
All hands together  
To share our joy.**

*pastoral Team of Bambamarca, Peru (Peruvian Catechism, 1985)*

**While watching the CIW video “With these Hands,” reflect on the following questions:**

- 1. Why present the story of farmworkers through images of their hands?**
- 2. What do the hands reveal about the history behind them?**
- 3. Look at our own hands. How are they similar/different than those you observed in the video?**
- 4. How can our hands join with the hands of farmworkers in order to build a more just world?**

How  
we  
can be



## *Faithful Consumers*

### **Food and Faith**

Woven in nearly all religions are spiritually significant traditions involving food--- reciting *Kiddush* with wine, breaking bread at the *Eucharist*, fasts during *Ramadan*, feasting on modak to celebrate *Ganesb Chaturthi*. Our faith rituals unite elements of spirituality with the food on our table. Yet, **everyday** we are offered opportunities to reflect on eating as an act of faith and as a vehicle through which to live out tenants of our spirituality. We then ask: How are the fruits and vegetables we eat and the purchasing decisions we make connected to our moral responsibility as people of faith? And what impact do our beliefs and consumer habits have on the CIW's struggle for farmworker justice?

Eating is commonly regarded as a spiritual act, food serves a symbolic role in sanctuaries and ceremonies, and it also brings us into relationship with others. A common spiritual belief holds that every person is endowed with intrinsic dignity that imparts uniqueness and immeasurable value. We can imagine imprints of the divine in everyone and everything on earth. And through food, we honor this personal sacredness by expressing love, care, concern, and appreciation for fellow human beings. Thus, a hamburger is not merely a source of nourishment, but also brings us into communion with those around our table *and* the people who made the meal possible.

Leaders of the United States Buddhist Peace Fellowship expressed this idea of mutuality in a letter to McDonald's stating, "*We are not separate from the suffering of another human being . . . This spiritual truth becomes clear in the example of our relationship to the farm worker, for we eat the very fruit of his or her suffering. The tomato we eat is imbued with the sweat and tears of the laborer who picks it from the vine. The source of our nutrition comes at a price that few of us are willing to consider. Once we become aware of the circumstances, we must act.*" Religious institutions are attentive to the needs of the poor, but historically they have invested in charitable models of giving. Soup kitchens, shelters and pantries serve an important purpose of meeting people's immediate need. But charity does not address the root cause of poverty or change conditions which perpetuate economically oppressive systems. How can we address farmworker suffering in order to bring about real and lasting justice for this community?

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is calling people of faith to stand in partnership with farmworkers to demand a transformation in the agricultural industry. The conviction that food grown and picked should honor that "sacred imprint" connects farmworkers and faith allies as partners. The CIW's *Campaign for Fair Food* seeks to ensure a just wage, a humane work environment, and a shift in the corporate power structure. Yet, it is also about us: as consumers we support the agricultural and restaurant industry through our purchases, and consequently, we can make a significant impact with our collective voice. Our spiritual beliefs about human dignity and a just world demand that we are mindful of conditions impacting those who gather the harvest.

Visit [www.allianceforfairfood.org/resources.html](http://www.allianceforfairfood.org/resources.html) for more faith-based educational resources and worship materials.

# **Stations of the Cross: CIW Farmworkers Journey toward Justice**

## ***Prepared for Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida 2007***

by Katharine Mitchell and Kathleen Wood

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is a farmworker organization committed to realizing social and economic justice for those who gather the harvest in our country's agricultural fields. Its current Campaign for Fair Food aims at holding fast food restaurants, like McDonald's, accountable for the poverty it imposes on farmworkers. Throughout the CIW's history, diverse religious communities—both leaders and lay people—have partnered with farmworkers in this struggle. Faith allies bring the power of their collective moral voice in society, while furthering the prophetic vision of a more just world for low-wage workers. Standing together, farmworkers and people of faith work towards the day when the dignity of farmworkers is restored, and the agricultural and corporate food industries protect the human rights of those laboring at the bottom of the food supply chain.

The purpose of the *Stations of the Cross: CIW Farmworkers Journey toward Justice* is to provide a space for individuals and communities of faith to reflect on the spiritual calling to work toward justice with farmworkers. This is an opportunity to meditate not only on Jesus' crucifixion, but also on his journey of bearing the cross. Faith allies in the CIW's struggle also walk toward a place of justice, and we invite you to consider how your participation can bring about a transformation in the agricultural system. Though based on the Catholic tradition of walking the Passion of Christ, this Lenten reflection is intended to be non-denominational. We hope that the selected scripture passages and brief reflections prompt a discernment process that deepens your understanding of the issues facing farmworkers and encourages you to walk this hopeful journey toward justice with us.



## I. Jesus is condemned to death.

*“Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept shouting, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’ A third time he said to them, ‘Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.’ But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished” (Luke 23: 20-25).*

The Gospels teach us that the fate of Jesus did not rest in the hands of the powerful; Herod and Pilate did not initiate the crucifixion. Rather, the crowd of people standing around Jesus vociferously demanded His death, and Pilate, fearful of the mob’s power, granted their desire. These ordinary people used their united voice to send Jesus to the cross. However, the Bible also tells us that where two or more are gathered in God’s name, God shall be there. Therefore, we know that another outcome is possible for the crowd that seeks righteousness instead of injury.

**Reflection:** In this first step of the journey of the cross, we are immediately confronted with our role as a community member in working toward justice. Consider an experience when you joined with others to confront injustice and to call for redress. What was the outcome? How did you experience God’s presence? In this spirit, the CIW is asking people of faith to use their collective, moral voice in society to insist on justice and dignity for farmworkers working in Florida’s fields. As you draw nearer to the cross, will you join with us in making human rights a reality in our agricultural fields?

## II. Jesus accepts his cross.

*“They clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his clothes on him. Then, they led him out to crucify him” (Mark 7: 18-20).*

Brought before Pilate and Herod, Jesus is accused of defying the Roman Empire by claiming to be a King. In challenging the social order, he is cast as an outsider and mocked for being a dissenter. As Jesus begins the journey of carrying a cross, we are reminded that he became human, not to work within standing social structures, but to transform those places in our neighborhoods, families, cities and governments that fail to protect the poor.

**Reflection:** Jesus will soon face physical pain and torment, but he must first bare the ridicule of the Roman soldiers. Reflect on a moment in your life when you were treated with contempt for a belief you held. How did the experience change the way you perceived your community? In seeking economic and social justice for farmworkers, the CIW confronts an entrenched power structure that deprecates farmworkers. For their part in transforming how workers are treated in the field, the agricultural industry and fast food chains have labeled the CIW as an agitator organization. Are we willing to act in accordance with our beliefs and stand with farmworkers even knowing it means being outside popular opinion?

### III. Jesus falls the first time.

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench...until he has established justice in the earth”* (Isaiah 42: 1-4, referenced in Matthew 12: 17-21).

With the addition of the large, wooden cross thrust on His back, Jesus soon stumbles in His attempt to carry such physical and emotional weight. As He proceeds down the path set out for him, He paradoxically gains strength while expending it. By the time He reaches the place of the cross, His fortitude has enraptured the crowd. Even the presiding Roman officer “praised God and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent’” (Luke 23:47).

**Reflection:** We know from our own journeys toward justice that the first steps are often the most difficult. We stumble and fall; sometimes we stand again, but other times we cannot muster the strength. As we each make our commitment—or recommitment—to walk alongside farmworkers in the struggle to end human rights abuses in the agricultural industry, we reflect on the obstacles that have prevented us from staying the course in the past. We identify these barriers, and we consider ways to confront, to change, or to work around them. We take great courage knowing that even when we feel merely like a “dimly burning wick,” Jesus promises that He will work through us and guide us until peace reigns on earth.

### IV. Jesus meets his mother.

*“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty’* (Luke 1: 46-47, 51-53).

As Mary watched her son submit to being mocked, beaten, stripped, and led to His death, she undoubtedly experienced a mother’s boundless grief. Yet, perhaps, she also watched mystified and angry at the seeming disparity between God’s promise delivered to her by the angel Gabriel and the reality of the horrific scene unraveling before her. Could this man—clothed in blood and sweat and taunted by the people—truly be the Messiah, the one God promised would create a just world?

**Reflection:** As we consider Mary’s experience during Jesus’ crucifixion, we reflect on our own memories of occasions where the purity of God’s promise and the ugly reality of this world seemed irreconcilable. How did you react in those situations? What words, promises, or visions allowed you to continue? As we look forward, we seek the patience and the faith to trust in what is unseen to bring about the just world that we cannot see--and often, cannot imagine. In our work with the CIW, we gain strength of conviction through God’s promise to Mary that Jesus will “lift up the lowly” and “fill the hungry with good things.” We see throughout the New Testament that Jesus cares most about the poor and that to walk with Jesus, we must walk with the poor.

## V. Simon helps Jesus carry His cross.

*“They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus” (Mark 15: 21).*

Simon is a peasant from the country, a migrant worker traveling to Jerusalem for work, not outwardly seeking to carry the burden of another’s condemnation. He is a person on his own journey drawn to ease the suffering of someone in distress. As Jesus walks the path to his crucifixion, he is beaten and abused. Just as Simon bore the weight of Christ’s cross, God reassures us that we do not bare our pain alone either. We can find solace in unburdening our yoke unto Him, which will give us rest (Mt. 11: 28-30). Pulled from the crowd, Simon lifts Jesus’ burden until he is strong enough to continue on his own.

**Reflection:** The story of Simon compels us to ask of ourselves: When our paths intersect with a sister or brother in need, how are we called to respond? The chaos and demands of life are overwhelming, often without immediate relief or obvious end. It is in this time that we are most grateful to friends and neighbors who extend their kindness and enter into our world. One form of giving is direct social service: donating to food banks, volunteering at a soup kitchen, or tutoring at-risk youth. Yet, though we may be like Simon, unaware of our call, Jesus challenges us to not only fulfill our neighbors immediate needs but also to work toward changing the structures and institutions that perpetuate societal injustices. For example, by directly increasing workers’ wages and calling for farmworkers to have a voice in matters relating to their working conditions, the CIW is transforming an exploitive agricultural industry. As partners of the CIW, we assume our role as allies in building a just social order, and we commit to walking the journey *with* farmworkers, as they find permanent relief to their burdens.

## VI. Veronica helps Jesus wipe his face.

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard each other as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2: 3-6).*

Unlike Simon, Veronica steps out from the crowd. She defies her personal fear, social rejection, and the authorities by tending to Jesus as He wills himself forward with the cross. Veronica initiated the call to be a humble servant, offering the simple gesture of cleaning Christ’s face as a symbol of devotion and presence to a person on the fringes of society. Her actions reflect the very teachings of the man whom she comforts; throughout his ministry, Christ invites the poor, the sick, and the rejected—not the social elite—to break bread and share a meal. With courage and openness like Veronica, we are able to love God through loving those around us.

**Reflection:** How often do we wait to be called, instead of acting on our own volition? When you are overwhelmed by the needs on earth—front-page articles on world hunger, *Save Darfur* posters and bracelets, homeless people sleeping at our feet—what compels you to take a step forward instead of the safer three steps back? When Veronica resisted the crowd’s jeering and moved forward to meet the needs of Jesus, surely she suppressed doubt: “Don’t do it. You will be hurt, ostracized, and scorned.” Yet, with steadfast faith and deep conviction, she wiped Jesus’ face in a profound act of compassion. Have you ever been in a position like Veronica? After decades of mistreatment in the agricultural industry, farmworkers in the CIW are calling on food corporations with power and influence to change the way farmworkers are treated. As consumers, are we prepared and determined to act rather than wait?

## VII. Jesus falls for the second time.

*“Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; and he said, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of thieves’”* (Luke 19: 45-46).

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, he rebuked individuals and businesses that put self-interest and profits over following God’s commandment to serve God and one another before we serve ourselves. As a young adult, when he came upon a house of worship that had become more of a marketplace than a temple, his reaction was visceral; he scolded those in attendance and forced them to leave. It is a stark contrast to the meek Jesus carrying a cross amidst the stares and jeering of onlookers.

**Reflection:** When we conjure an image of a “house of prayer,” too often we imagine a building with four walls and steeple, but more and more we are recognizing that all the earth should be a place where we prayerfully stand before God. If Jesus were on earth today, how do you think he would react to witnessing the corporations that profit from sweatshop-like conditions all over the world? Would he support the work of the CIW to give poor people a voice and economic justice? Let us work to make God’s will be done on earth.

## VIII. Jesus comforts the women.

*“A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed’”* (Luke 23: 27-31).

As His body aches and His soul becomes increasingly weary, Jesus looks out on those who have followed Him to the place where He will be nailed to the cross. Despite His dire condition, Jesus musters the stamina to address the mourning women in the crowd. He admonishes them to direct their concern to the broken world in which they live, not to His own suffering. Hear in this scripture that God calls us beyond personal anguish and to a place of rebuilding community. This scene of lamentation is turned into a summons for action, as Christ reminds us that through our own humanity and ability to connect with one another, we can heal the Kingdom of God. Jesus tells the women: don’t mourn for me; instead, cry out for your world, wrapped in darkness and cradling a multitude of suffering people. Weep for them. Love them. Seek justice with them. Although physically weak, Jesus offers a strong command to these women to recognize the injustices around them and to condemn them in God’s name.

**Reflection:** It seems too often that we allow ourselves to be ignorant about the stories of our neighbor, closed to the experiences of those in other races and social classes, and so separated from others that we no longer make eye contact or share a common language of respect and compassion. In this spirit, let us remember and lift up the CIW members and allies who are bringing the story of the farmworker to our nation’s consciousness. Tomato pickers, people of faith, students, human rights activists, and many more bear witness to the importance of the “Campaign for Fair Food.” Together, we can turn a tale of mourning into a story of rebuilding a more just community for all God’s children.

## **IX. Jesus falls for the third time.**

*“He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place...he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done’” (Luke 22:39-42).*

On many occasions in the Gospels, we are told how Jesus regularly retreats to a place of solitude in order to rest and to pray to God. In this passage, Jesus withdraws unto Himself for the final time; He knows that tomorrow will commence His journey to the cross. Yet even in his busiest, most worrisome season, Jesus makes the time to kneel before God, to relieve his uncertainty and anxiety, and to beseech God for purposeful strength—vigor he would desperately depend on in the coming days.

**Reflection:** As people of faith, we believe there is a season for everything: for working and resting, for waking and sleeping, and for giving and receiving. From scripture and through our own experiences, we recognize the necessity of rest to heal us, to improve us, and to rejuvenate our journeys. However, we also know that rest is a luxury, one that members of the CIW do not have. They toil in the fields from dawn until dusk, working six-day weeks without sick leave, overtime pay, health insurance, or vacation time. When pesticides and heavy machinery cause serious injury or birth defects in their children, employers assume no blame and offer no financial support. They are left to suffer alone with no reprieve. By standing with the CIW, we are declaring that farmworkers—just like Jesus and just like each of us—deserve rest after each season of work.

## **X. Jesus is stripped of His clothes.**

*“And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they laid out the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, King of the Jews’” (Matthew 27: 35-37).*

Jesus had prophesized this very moment. The accusations, mocking, torture, and physical suffering culminate in this act: His oppressors disrobe Him and humiliate Him. In doing so, they hope to strip His dignity. After Jesus’ scant coverings are removed, they are divided among the ravenous perpetrators. Without clothes to cover his ragged body, Jesus hangs on the cross, vulnerable and exposed.

**Reflection:** Every day across this country, farmworkers are made to feel humiliated and stripped of their dignity. We attempt to disrobe them of their human rights with labels like “illegals” and “undocumented aliens.” Rarely, do they receive deserved respect. Their work is laborious and dangerous, their pay affords destitute housing conditions, and often they live without any familial or community support. Before the CIW, each Florida farmworker faced these conditions alone, sometimes even forced to work in modern-day slavery operations. Since 1993, the CIW has provided a place for farmworkers to gather and to collectively reclaim their stolen dignity. Together, they are standing up to the food corporations and agribusinesses that “by casting lots” prey on their vulnerability in our society.

## **XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

*“One of the criminals who was hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise’” (Luke 23: 39-43).*

Up until His last moments on earth, Jesus reached out to those in need of Him and assured them that through faith, they too would have a place in His kingdom, both on earth and in heaven. Jesus’ grace extended well beyond the pious and the do-gooders; He forgave and blessed a convicted murderer while hanging from the cross. In order to receive new life in Christ, He requires only faithful conviction and the ability to accept His gift of grace.

**Reflection:** As people of faith, we are called to build reconciliation among God’s people and to work with others to bring about a more loving, just world. Thinking about your own experiences, do you recall an instance when you thought a person or group was incapable of feeling compassion or unwilling to make contrition? Similarly, describe an instance when you were unkind and unrepentant. Did somebody reach out to you and show you a better way? In our current struggle with the CIW for better wages and working conditions for farmworkers, we strive to work with—not against—McDonald’s and its management to compel them to set right that which they are responsible for abusing. We are hopeful in our knowledge that throughout the New Testament, people have turned away from their ways of darkness and have walked toward the light of Christ.

## **XIII. Jesus dies on the cross.**

*“It was now about the sixth hour, and, with a sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, he said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ With these words, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he gave praise to God and said, ‘This was a great and good man’” (Luke 23: 44-48).*

The last moments of Jesus’ life are gripping; the scriptures describe the ascendance of Christ’s spirit as evoking supernatural phenomena, which is both suspenseful and striking. Jesus’ death is not peaceful and shakes us awake to the sacrifice He makes to bring forgiveness to God’s people. But, Jesus’ life and his journey on earth ought not be overshadowed by this event. In his radical method of preaching to the poor, tending to the weak, sharing meals with outcasts and downtrodden in society, Jesus leaves for us a compelling model of social change. In death, Christ brings redemption to the world, but through his life, we are provided the call to seek justice and transformation.

**Reflection:** Death is a deeply traumatic experience that can take us to a dark place. In our mourning and sorrow, we feel immobilized by pain and emptiness. As the healing process begins, and we recover from the loss, we redirect our attention on celebrating our loved one’s life. How have you overcome and refocused in times that are troublesome and dark? For farmworkers, this is a daily question as they face discrimination, marginalization, and isolation in the United States. The CIW views this struggle as an opportunity for change. From unforeseeable tragedy to being the voice of a dramatic remodeling of our agricultural industry, farmworkers are walking toward the light, seeking dignity and justice in the fields.

### **XIII. Jesus is taken down from the cross.**

*“After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed the body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there” (John 19: 38-42).*

The man who offered to serve Jesus after He had died on the cross was not from the area where Jesus was crucified; Joseph of Arimathea was a devoted follower of Jesus who came to meet Jesus at the cross. After he convinced Pilate to give him Jesus’ body, Joseph worked with Nicodemus to perform the Jewish customary burial rites for the deceased and to ensure Jesus’ burial was done properly by traditional Jewish standards. While serving the deceased Jesus, Joseph supplied an open heart, cultural sensitivity, and a willing spirit.

**Reflection:** We know that we are not farmworkers. We come from different places and backgrounds than CIW members, but we are united for a common purpose: to see God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In this spirit, we assume the role of allies in our work with the CIW, standing in solidarity with them as people of faith. Above all, we commit ourselves to amplifying their voice and not our own, and we seek to build bridges between this struggle for justice and our calling to make peace by pursuing righteousness.

### **XIV. Jesus is laid in the tomb.**

*“Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sisters, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene . . . So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb” (John 16:25, Matthew 27: 59-61).*

The crowd has dispersed and with it the fever that followed Jesus’ journey. We can almost imagine the world standing in silence after being shook with the mob’s anger and jolted as Christ took his last breath. Those who loved Jesus remain at the cross to see the nails removed from his hands and feet. They have waited the entire day, helpless and seemingly powerless to protect or care for him. But now in death, they take Jesus in their arms and wait for his return.

**Reflection:** In the moments after Jesus’ death, we are shown a powerful example of great care in extreme circumstances. The dust and blood that outline his closed eyes, the holes that rip the skin and the deep gash through his side are signs that God was made flesh. In these circumstances, individuals like Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, Joseph of Arimathea, and Mary Magdalene remind us that ordinary people are able to demonstrate extraordinary love. When did you face extraordinary circumstances and respond with tenderness? How can we be both diligent advocates for justice while waiting in expectation and hope for the realization of our dreams? Despite the darkness of poverty, abuse in the fields, neglect from corporations such as McDonald’s, and physical distance from loved ones, farmworkers wait in expectation for the day that their work will be rewarded with a just wage and respected for its vital contribution to society.

## XV. Resurrection!

*“As she said this she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not recognize him. Jesus said, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him and I will go and remove him.’ Jesus said, ‘Mary!’ She knew him then and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbuni!’--- which means Master” (John 20: 13-17).*

After finding the tomb empty, the disciples leave Mary resting beside the place Jesus’ body was placed. She is deeply confused and frightened that her Lord is missing. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus describes events that will come to pass before he dies, but his followers cannot believe and do not comprehend the significance of the impending story. Thus, when confronted by the friend she seeks, Mary does not know Jesus has risen from the dead; she only sees a stranger. It is when Christ calls her by name that Mary’s heart is opened, and she knows her Savior is resurrected.

*Reflection:* How does Mary not recognize Jesus, even though she has walked with him many times and considers him friend and Lord? We may question her familiarity with Jesus, but what happens to Mary at the tomb occurs each day in our communities. When was the last time you failed to recognize the sacred image of God in another human being? Would your interaction be different if you opened your heart and saw the figure of Christ standing before you? Farmworkers know the feeling of being overlooked. For their work in the fields and their sacrifices in hope of a better life for their families, farmworkers are pushed to the margins of our society. The CIW calls on people of faith to see farmworkers as equals in the eyes of God and worthy of the dignity and respect granted to them by our loving Creator. Although they now suffer as strangers, farmworkers believe the day will come when they too will be considered neighbors, and the hearts of the multitudes will be open to them. Will that transformation begin with you?

## **Advent Reflections on the CIW's Campaign for Fair Food December 2006**

### **ADVENT REFLECTION WEEK ONE:**

#### **Candle of Faith**

By The Rev. Noelle Damico, Associate for Fair Food, PC(USA)

In Hebrew 11:1 we read "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." On March 8th, 2005 the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and Taco Bell reached an historic agreement that concretely addresses the sub-poverty wages and working conditions of farmworkers and is the first step toward moving the fast-food industry toward a new way of doing business that respects human rights.

When the workers first began to engage Taco Bell in 2000, many people doubted that the CIW, whose members are among the most impoverished workers in America and have no political clout and few legal rights would be able to change the way the fast-food industry does business. But the farmworkers of the CIW had faith that change was not only necessary, it was possible, and they could, despite all the odds, bring it about. Early support for the workers and the boycott came from people of faith who, together with the farmworkers, were ready to work with hope and conviction for that which was not yet seen.

The farmworkers remind us that, by living into a just world whose evidence is not yet seen, we actually contribute to bringing it to birth. During this Advent season, may our faith be imaginative and active as we anticipate Christ's realm of justice by living as if it has already arrived!

### **ADVENT REFLECTION WEEK TWO:**

#### **Candle of Peace**

By Katharine Mitchell, Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." --Matthew 5:9

As great leaders throughout history have demonstrated, the process of becoming a peacemaker is transformative and, at times, uncomfortable. For, it demands that we first seek justice. The prophet Isaiah warns, "The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths" (59:8-9). In his Letters from a Birmingham Jail, Dr. Martin Luther King reflected that the greatest obstacle to the civil rights movement is not the extremist. Rather, King wrote, it is the person "more devoted to 'order' than to justice, who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.

The CIW is a force for justice, so that the next generation may know peace. Throughout the past 10 years, thousands of CIW members and their allies have stood together calling for fair wages and the end to sweatshop conditions in Florida's tomato fields. Their work has resulted in the end to physical violence in Immokalee fields, increased wages for workers picking for Taco Bell, and the freeing of over 1,000 modern-day slaves in the agricultural industry. With the prayerful support and action of faith allies, the CIW is planting seeds of justice that will, with diligence, bear fruits of peace. In our partnership with the CIW and in our own lives, as we seek justice during this Advent season, may our spirit and actions lead us to be peacemakers.

### **ADVENT REFLECTION WEEK THREE:**

#### **Candle of Love**

By Francisca Cortez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers

This is a time of happiness and peace in our hearts, when we give love to our loved ones. But, there are also moments of nostalgia and desperation in our hearts, even though we know that Christmas is coming and that peace shall reign.

For us, the farmworkers, we continue to work hard, struggling to achieve peace and harmony. During this season, we find ourselves again without our loved ones that we left behind to come to work in this land to better our lives. But instead, we found that in this land, there is no respect for our dignity.

Every one of us must walk step by step because, otherwise, we do not know what we may trip over. Sometimes, it is sickness because of our long hours of work. Still, you think of your family you left behind and continue walking forward without looking back, although we are always thinking of our loved ones.

The Lord, our Savior, will soon come to be with us. God says to share what little you have with the poor so that they may eat. In faith, we are confident that soon the good news will come, including a dignified life of peace, happiness, and tranquility for all farmworkers.

We do not demand more than what is set for us, only what we deserve as human beings. And the love of Jesus Christ will always reign in our hearts because he chooses to walk with each of us.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Amen.

### **ADVENT REFLECTION WEEK FOUR:**

#### **Candle of Joy**

By the Rev. Jim Boler, Associate Pastor Sanibel Island UCC and Board Member of Interfaith Action

"See, I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10) While in the fields, Shepherds are terrified by the light of an angel. And then they hear the voice say, "Don't be afraid. The good, joyful news is for all the people." Joy to the world!

Cesar Chavez said, "Jesus' life and words are a challenge at the same time that they are Good News. They are a challenge to those of us who are poor and oppressed. By His life He is calling us to give ourselves to the other, to sacrifice for those who suffer, to share our lives with our brothers and sisters who are also oppressed. He is calling us to 'hunger and thirst after justice' in the same way that we hunger and thirst after food and water: that is, by putting our yearning into practice." The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is putting the yearning for justice into practice and inviting our support.

We pray, God, for your help in tearing down the borders we have built around our own hearts, that we may see you in each person, and that we may learn to love and welcome each of your children as members of one people, one world, one God.

### **CHRISTMAS REFLECTION: Where Justice Puts Forth Roots, The Christ Candle**

A song for our partnership work with the CIW by

By The Rev. Noelle Damico

Donde la verdad y la paz viven;  
Donde la gente se apoyan;  
Donde la justicia toma la raiz,  
Cristo nace, Cristo nace, Cristo nace alli.

Where truth and peace live;  
Where people support one another;  
Where justice puts forth roots;  
Christ is born, Christ is born, There Christ is born.

# In Our Words: Prayers from CIW Members and Allies

*Throughout its work, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) has partnered with faith leaders from diverse traditions. People of faith partner with farmworkers using the power of their conviction and thirst for justice.*

*The prayers here are written by clergy and farmworkers to bless and strengthen the CIW's campaign and help us be mindful while walking this journey to justice.*

*There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you... You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt... You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

*(The Torah: Exodus)*

*Your worker must be equal to you in food and drink. You should not eat refined bread and he eat coarse bread, you drink old wine and he drink new wine, you sleep on a mattress and he on straw.*

*(The Babylonian Talmud)*

*"It is our obligation to elevate agricultural labor from its lowly state.*

*Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, 1<sup>st</sup> Chief Rabbi of Palestine (1865-1935)*

*Elohaynoo va'lohay avotaynoo – Our God and God of our Ancestors, keep us ever mindful of Your commandments and give us the resolve to keep them whole heart and willing spirits. Help us to lift up the fallen, help those in need, and to stand by those we are commanded to support and sustain. As You delivered us from slavery to freedom, from oppression to dignity, so may we, by Your great and holy name, help redeem all the oppressed and persecuted. Make us Your face of justice and compassion in our world, so that the love of Your name will hallow every home and every heart.*

*Barukh att Adoneye, ga'al Yisra'el. Praised are You, O Lord, Redeemer of Isra'el.*

Rabbi Bruce Diamond, D.D.  
The Community Free Synagogue  
Fort Myers, Florida

*Gracious and Almighty God*

*You have called all those who call on your name to seek justice and peace for all humanity. You have called all those who call on your name to bear one another's burdens and to bind up one another's wounds. We ask your blessing on the CIW as they seek to answer your call to justice, for it is in answering that call that lives will be changed forever. Guide the individuals involved in the work of the CIW that they would be attentive to your voice and your direction. May the results of their efforts in fair pay, better working conditions be only the beginning of the realization of a world in which, regardless of race or culture there are no barriers. Grant them, O God, success, so that all may know the benefits of decent housing. Bless their work so that families separated by borders can be reunited and children can be raised in loving households knowing that they too are worthy of a fair wage and a good education. May the work of the Coalition, unite us all as sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ coming together hand in hand and arm in arm to build a world where there is peace and justice guided by your love. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen*

*Reverend Susan Rice  
Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church  
Naples, Florida*



*Educating and animating people of faith to partner with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) for farmworker justice and dignity.*

239-986-0688 ♦ 1107 New Market Rd. Immokalee FL 34142

**Religious Leaders' Statements in support of the CIW's McDonald's Campaign  
2005-2006**

*The Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar* (General Secretary, National Council of Churches USA)



McDonald's, we at the National Council of Churches expect you to do better. You have acquired a strong reputation for social accountability. Now we expect you to build on that reputation to accomplish real change in partnership with the farmworkers who are so sorely abused by the current system. Now is the time for McDonald's to become a partner with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in transforming those aspects of the agricultural and fast food industries that have exploited farmworkers for corporate profit. As a corporation that benefits in the form of low-cost tomatoes from the current system, you have a pressing moral responsibility to act now.

*The Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk* (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))



We do this [support the CIW] because scripture calls us to be stewards of God's creation, which includes our economic life, and because we follow Jesus Christ who, as a poor man himself, inaugurated his own ministry by bringing "good news to the poor." . . . McDonald's has a clear moral responsibility to take leadership to assure just working conditions and compensation for the very persons who provide the products which are at the heart of its operation. Any corporation which benefits through the exploitation of others is gravely implicated in such exploitation and has a moral and ethical responsibility to end that exploitation.

*Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)



Farmworkers should participate in setting and monitoring those [ethical treatment] standards, as workers know best the conditions to be remedied . . . Given the competitiveness of global produce markets and the significance that your company's business constitutes for any individual grower, I hope that you will agree that McDonald's is in a position to require that enable suppliers to meet the standards you set.

*Rev. Linda Jaramillo* (United Church of Christ)



The United Church of Christ has a long history of working for social and economic justice. We have a special interest in farm workers, people with whom Jesus would have particularly identified himself. He would have classified them among "the least" of God children when viewed through the lens of social and economic privilege. But as beloved children of God, farm workers are entitled to an equitable portion of the abundance God gives this world.

*National Farmworker Ministry*



McDonald's Code of Conduct states that they will only do business with those suppliers who act according to their corporate principles, which include that all workers be treated with dignity and respect, that all workers be compensated fairly, and that all work environments be clean, safe and sanitary. If McDonald's is honest about its insistence that suppliers adhere to these principles, it should not rely on a system such as SAFE whose founders include growers who have been violating these principles for years. Rather it should look for new models that include a substantive role for those who are most affected - the farm workers.

*His Eminence John R. Manz* (Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago)



To date, I have been extremely disappointed in McDonald's failure to work together with the CIW to make changes in its supply chain that will directly improve the lives of farmworkers. Catholic social tradition teaches us of the importance of participation in the issues that affect one's life and it is the farmworkers in the fields who most intimately know the changes that need to be urgently made. The participation of the CIW in developing and enforcing a meaningful code of conduct and an improved wage system will only help McDonald's to ensure the highest standards of social responsibility to its consumers.

**Interfaith  
Action**

*Educating and animating people of faith to partner with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) for farmworker justice and dignity.*

239-986-0688 ♦ 1107 New Market Rd. Immokalee FL 34142

**Catholic Leaders' Statements in support of the CIW's McDonald's Campaign  
2005-2006**

*Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Farmworkers should participate in setting and monitoring those [ethical treatment] standards, as workers know best the conditions to be remedied. In the "Responsible Purchasing" statement on its website, McDonald's states "we know we can work with our suppliers to help improve that practices and set an example for other companies." I urge you to apply that standard to how your produce suppliers treat farmworkers. Given the competitiveness of global produce markets and the significance that your company's business constitutes for any individual grower, I hope that you will agree that McDonald's is in a position to require that enable suppliers to meet the standards you set . . . McDonald's has been a leader in the fast food industry. I join my brother bishops in Florida in urging McDonald's to exercise its leadership now on behalf of greater fairness and justice for Florida farmworkers.



*His Eminence John R. Manz*, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

To date, I have been extremely disappointed in McDonald's failure to work together with the CIW to make changes in its supply chain that will directly improve the lives of farmworkers. Catholic social tradition teaches us of the importance of participation in the issues that affect one's life and it is the farmworkers in the fields who most intimately know the changes that need to be urgently made. The participation of the CIW in developing and enforcing a meaningful code of conduct and an improved wage system will only help McDonald's to ensure the highest standards of social responsibility to its consumers.



*John J. Nevins*, retired Bishop of Venice in Florida

I strongly believe that the land was created by God and each person has a right to human dignity. Both the growers and workers, as they carry on their respective activities, participate in God's creation. It is through their mutual efforts that food is brought to our tables and to restaurants such as McDonald's. McDonald's is to be praised for already committing itself to better the lives of workers in the coffee industry. Having set that precedence, I urge that a comparable effort be made with the Coalition so as to benefit the pickers of tomatoes and other products in Florida that are purchased by a widely respected company, such as McDonald's. Rest assured that my prayers will entreat God to guide your company, the growers and the workers to work out a mutually satisfactory solution to these major issues.

*Frank J. Dewane*, Bishop of Venice in Florida

It seems to me that as McDonald's addresses the issue of more nutritious food for its consumers, as a means of keeping them content and healthy, it would also want to be concerned about wages of the workers who pick its purchased produce, and live in adverse economic circumstances . . . An agreement between the two organizations will also provide for greater transparency and opportunities for worker participation. Neither one of these elements is present in the current self-regulatory efforts. Surely, our hard workers, who help place McDonald's meals on our tables (or in our cars), should also be allowed to sit at the table of negotiations with the company.

**Meditating on the Journey:  
Collected Reflections on the Harvest, Farmworkers and Social Justice**

Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida (IA) is an organization that animates people of faith to partner with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). Through education and immersion programs, IA creates opportunities for allies to reflect on the intersection of faith and worker issues. The following compellation of prayers, quotes and reflections are taken from sources, which mission addresses farmworker justice in the United States. Also find included quotes from various individuals who inform the journey of creating a more equitable community.

*For additional resources, please visit the following organizations' websites:*

- \* Presbyterian Church (USA) Fair Food [[pcusa.org/fairfood](http://pcusa.org/fairfood)]
- \* National Farmworker Ministry [[nfwm.org](http://nfwm.org)]
- \* Interfaith Worker Justice [[IWJ.org](http://IWJ.org)]
- \* National Catholic Rural Life Conference [[ncrlc.com](http://ncrlc.com)]



## **Farmworker Prayer**

*Cesar E. Chavez*

Show me the suffering of the most miserable; so I will know my people's plight.  
Free me to pray for others; for you are present in every person.  
Help me take responsibility for my own life; so that I can be free at last.  
Grant me courage to serve others; for in service there is true life.  
Give me honesty and patience; so that I can work with others workers.  
Bring song forth and celebrations; so that the Spirit will be alive among us.  
Let the Spirit flourish and grow; so that we never tire of the struggle.  
Let us remember those who have died for justice; for they given us life.  
Help us to love even those who hate us; so we can change the world. Amen.

## **Prayer for Mindfulness**

National Farm Worker Ministry

Let us begin by recalling the words of Cesar Chavez: "Every time we sit at a table at night or in the morning to enjoy the fruits and grain and vegetables from our good earth, remember that they come from the work of men and women and children who have been exploited for generations . . ." Almighty God, too often we don't pay attention, we don't stop to think that, even in this day and age, injustice remains an invisible ingredient in much of the food that we eat. Shake is awake, O God, open our eyes to see our power and obligations as consumers to help put things right. Justice demands it. Love demands it.

## **Overcome**

*Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Nobel Peace Prize Lecture (December 11, 1964)*

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality.  
This is why right, temporarily defeated,  
is stronger than evil triumphant.

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits.

I believe that what self-centered men have torn down,  
other-centered men can build up.

I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed and nonviolent redemptive goodwill proclaimed the rule of the land. And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.

I still believe that we shall overcome.

### **To Charter our Course for the Future**

*Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "To Charter Our Course for the Future," Address to SCLC staff (May 22, 1967)*

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience, but where he stands in moments of challenge, moments of great crisis and controversy. And this is where I choose to cast my lot today.

There may be others who want to go another way, but when I took up the cross I recognized its meaning. It is not something that you merely put your hands on. It is not something that you wear.

The cross is something that you bear and ultimately that you die on.

The cross may mean the death of your popularity.

It may mean the death of your bridge to the White House.

It may mean the death of a foundation grant. It may cut your budget down a little, but take up your cross and just bear it.

And that is the way I have decided to go.

### **Living Bread**

*Thomas Merton (From the book "Living Bread")*

From the moment you put a piece of bread in your mouth you are part of the world. Who grew the wheat? Who made the bread? Where did it come from? You are in relationship with all who brought it to the table. We are least separate and most in common when we eat and drink.

### **Common Action**

*Dorothy Day*

Men are beginning to realize that they are not individuals but persons in society, that man alone is weak and adrift, that he must seek strength in common action.

### **Plenty to Do**

*Dorothy Day*

There is plenty to do, for each one of us, working on our own hearts, changing our own attitudes, in our own neighborhoods.

### **Prayer for Creation**

*National Farmworker Ministry*

Lord of all creation, give us the eyes to see your earth and every element with its intrinsic beauty and value; all people as sisters and brothers. Help us to build up a world where we can share the abundance of this earth through justice and peace; cherishing the beauty in each other, and in all your created world. Amen.

## **Benediction**

*Edie Rassel, National Farmworker Ministry Board*

May God our creator, the one who calls us, transforms us, and redeems us, bless us with the courage, vision and strength to work for justice for all workers, everywhere. Amen

## **Grace Over a Thanksgiving Meal**

*Interfaith Worker Justice*

O God of seen and harvest, we pause to give you thanks for the table set before us and the food that graces it.

In a moment we will eat this food, harvest from many parts of the nation and world. It will be transformed into the flesh and blood of our bodies. Keep us mindful of the many workers who labor in the field and factory to bring us this food.

From the bounty and nourishment of the meal, we dedicate ourselves to work to abolish poverty, unsafe working conditions, workplace abuse, and unjust wages among those who feed us through their labor.

We pray this in the name of the Creator God, who not only fed the Israelites in the desert but transformed people like us into disciples for justice and peace. Amen.

## **Grace over a Thanksgiving Meal (2)**

*Interfaith Worker Justice*

O God of seed and harvest, we come to this table mindful of Your Graciousness.

Our eyes, our hearts, our bodies – alive with the cells and energy of our muscles, bones, and flesh – are created and nourished by the food from your bountiful hand.

Keep us mindful of the workers whose labor makes our meal possible. May the nourishment of this meal strengthen us to work for justice and equity, so that all people may enjoy the abundance of your creation. Amen.

## **Prayer for Forgiveness**

*Edie Rassel, National Farmworker Ministry*

God, we have failed to understand and accept the great demands placed upon us by your kingdom. We have joined your causes, but have lost interest. We promised to be courageous, but find ourselves afraid. We want to be sensitive, but find ourselves hard and callous. We are confronted with great opportunities for service in the world of justice and peace, but fail to take advantage of them. Forgive us when we let our comfort stand in the way of the cries and struggles of the poor, the hungry, the sick and the prisoner. We have allowed self to blind us and have forgotten that whatever is done to any one of your children is done to you. Have mercy, O God, and hear our confessions. Take our limitations and turn them into possibilities for service; Amen.

## **Multiplying and Beginning**

*Dorothy Day, "Loaves and Fishes"*

"Young people say, 'What good can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?

They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes."

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us? When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our brothers [and sisters] with that burning love, that passion, which led to the Cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.'"

## **Praise**

*Farm Worker Justice*

Bless the hands of the people of the earth,  
The hands that plant the seed,  
The hands that bind the harvest,  
The hands that carry the burden of life.

Soften the hands of the oppressor and  
Strengthen the hands of the oppressed.

Bless the hands of the workers.  
Bless the hands of those in power above them  
That the measure they deal will be tempered  
With justice and compassion. Amen.

## **Yearning into Practice**

*Cesar Chavez*

Jesus' life and words are a challenge at the same time that they are Good News. They are a challenge to those of us who are poor and oppressed. By His life He is calling us to give ourselves to the other, to sacrifice for those who suffer, to share our lives with our brothers and sisters who are also oppressed. He is calling us to 'hunger and thirst after justice' in the same way that we hunger and thirst after food and water: that is, by putting our yearning into practice.

## **Giving Yourself**

*Cesar Chavez*

We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violence struggle for peace and justice you also find that people give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love

## **Beatitudes of the Farm Worker**

*National Farmworker Ministry*

**I was hungry**, and you said “We only deal with problems in the city, not in the rural areas.”

**I was imprisoned**, and you said you were sorry but there was nothing you could do.

**I was naked**, and you looked the other way as you passed me by in your expensive three-piece suite.

**I was sick** with pesticide poisoning, and you never thought of the human cost in the vegetables on your table.

**I was homeless**, a migrant sleeping in my old car with my family of six, and you refused to see how your board members could make a difference.

**I was grieving**, over my children who never had a chance to get an education, and you said “Too bad” and continued with your business as usual.

**Whatever you do to the least of my people, make no mistake, you do it to me.**

## **Personal Responsibility**

Pope Paul VI

Let all the people examine themselves, to see what they have done up to now, and what they ought to do. It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action. It is too easy to throw back on others responsibility for injustices, if at the same time one does not realize how each one shares in it personally.

## **Love**

Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991

Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.

## Prayers and Petitions

Sarah Osmer, Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida

For the farmworkers who toil in the fields earning sub-poverty wages, without benefits or basic rights enjoyed by most other workers, let us pray to the Lord.

For the liberation and safety of the farmworkers in Florida and throughout the world, who at this very moment, are held against their will in modern-day slavery, let us pray to the Lord.

For McDonald's, Burger King, Chipotle, and other corporations that buy Florida's produce to practice social responsibility and value the dignity of the farmworkers in their supply chain more than their profits, let us pray to the Lord.

For the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in their Campaign for Fair Food, and all those who are working for justice and dignity for farmworkers, let us pray to the Lord.

For the mindfulness to remember those who harvest our fruits and vegetables and for the courage to partner with farmworkers to work for justice and dignity, let us pray to the Lord.