

South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice



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March 20, 2010

Joint Statement from the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida & South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice

March 8th marked the five-year anniversary of the agreement between the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Yum Brands, the parent company for Taco Bell. Since that date, other companies including Burger King, McDonalds, Subway and Whole Foods have reached agreements with the farmworkers who provide the tomatoes for our tables. These agreements have included not only small, but much needed wage increases, but have also included codes of conduct designed to prevent slavery in the fields. And yet, while we are encouraged by these actions, slavery still exists and there are still companies who are apparently turning a blind eye to the conditions experienced by our brothers and sisters who work to grow and harvest the food that we too often take for granted.

As people of faith, we open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts to truly see the situation in which our neighbors live. We seek the courage to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters. As we approach Farmworker Awareness Week, recognizing that slavery and workplace abuses still exist in Florida as remnants of the sharecropping system, we ask that Publix also stands up and offers to stand in solidarity with the workers in its supply chain by ensuring fair wages and conditions for the farmworkers who pick its tomatoes. Publix is known for treating its employees well and joining with local communities during times of crisis. We ask that Publix address the crisis in our community by hearing what members of Congress, the U.S. Department of Labor, and people of faith have stated – all workers need to be treated with respect and justice and the abysmal conditions in the fields of Florida must end.

Publix will be opening two new stores on Saturday, March 20th, one in the Redlands and one in Homestead, both farming communities. We hope that Publix recognizes this as an opportunity to join hands with communities of faith and reach out to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in an effort to bring justice to those who bring food to us.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Smith
South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice

Archdeacon Fritz Bazin
Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida