

**Title: Resolution to End Present-Day Slavery in the Fields
Action of Immediate Witness, Adopted June 29, 2008**

BECAUSE Unitarian Universalists affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large, the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

BECAUSE systematic abuse occurs in the agriculture industry including sub-poverty wages, no right to overtime pay, and no right to organize. Major produce-purchasing corporations profit from artificially low costs of produce picked by workers in conditions which sometimes become slavery. These conditions are antithetical to UU principles.

WHEREAS A Florida farmworkers' organization, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), has assisted the US Department of Justice in uncovering, investigating and successfully prosecuting five of six cases of present-day slavery in Florida's fields, freeing over 1,000 farmworkers.

WHEREAS In January 2008, a federal Grand Jury indicted farm labor contractors on charges of conspiracy, holding workers in involuntary servitude, and peonage, alleging that employers kept tomato pickers in locked U-Haul trucks, tied workers, and beat workers who tried to escape.

WHEREAS In 2005, the CIW reached an historic agreement with Yum Brands, owner of Taco Bell and four other restaurant chains, to establish a code of conduct with zero-tolerance for slavery and better wages and conditions for tomato harvesters. In 2007, agreement was reached with McDonald's. Last month, Burger King also signed.

WHEREAS The CIW won the 2007 Anti-Slavery International Award for uncovering and investigating slavery cases and for innovative campaigns that offer "a successful example of a preventative approach to forced labour," as well as the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.

WHEREAS This proposed Action of Immediate Witness builds upon several previous General Assembly actions since 1969. Most recently, The UUA "urges its member congregations ...to work specifically in favor ...of) the right to organize and bargain collectively, protection from unsafe working conditions and protection from unjust dismissal. (1997)"

WHEREAS UU congregations, individual UUs and the UUA Advocacy and Witness have assisted the CIW in previous successful efforts by providing housing, meals, financial support, letters, and participating in campaign actions.

WHEREAS both the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee are members of the Alliance for Fair Food, a network of human rights, religious, student, labor, and grassroots organizations who work in partnership with the CIW.

Therefore, be it resolved: The 2008 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges member congregations:

- to call for federal legislation outlawing the abuses described above and guaranteeing minimum wages and the right to organize;
- to call for greater support and implementation of the worker protection functions of the Department of Labor;
- to explore means of imposing the same standards on all growers and suppliers, wherever located, from whom the United States imports food and food products
- to join the Alliance for Fair Food in calling on large produce purchasers to help the CIW enact enforceable codes of conduct against slavery and abuses in the fields;
- to improve sub-poverty wages faces by farm workers for decades.
- To working with the Alliance and the CIW in calling upon restaurant and grocery corporations to end slavery and sweatshops in the fields.