

“The Public Eye Awards 2006”

Nomination form B (Positive Award for an NGO)

You may nominate either your own organisation or another NGO.

Only NGOs may be nominated that are/were leading campaigns focusing on the policy or the behaviour of one or more multinational corporates.

The nominations will be made public before the Awards Ceremony. Handing in a precise, detailed and formulated nomination (please do not just send keywords, but full sentences) in the given form saves us a great deal of (editorial) work!

If you nominate your own organisation, please give detailed answers to the questions below. If you nominate another NGO, please answer the questions as detailed as possible. If needed, we will get back to the nominated NGO.

Enclosures such as your own studies or newspaper articles on the case as well as film material are most welcome.

Nominated NGO

Name: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers

Headquarters: Immokalee, Florida – U.S.A.

Founded in: 1993

Website: www.ciw-online.org

Number of employees: ~ 10

Number of members: 3,500 +

Field of action:

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is a membership-led organization of agricultural workers based in Immokalee, Florida, that seeks justice for farmworkers and promotes their fair treatment in accordance with national and international labor standards. Its membership consists of over thirty-five hundred people, who are largely Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants, with whom the Coalition leads robust grassroots organizing and education initiatives of migrant farmworkers in Florida.

Send your nomination(s) to: The Public Eye Awards, Berne Declaration, Quellenstrasse 25, PO Box, CH-8031 Zurich, Switzerland; email: publiceye@evb.ch; Fax: +41 (0)44 277 70 01.

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Among its accomplishments, the Coalition has aided in the prosecution of five slavery operations by the US Department of Justice and US Federal Bureau of Investigations, leading to the liberation of over 1,000 workers.

The Coalition uses creative methods to educate consumers about human rights abuses in the U.S. agriculture industry, corporate social responsibility, and how consumers can help workers realize their social change goals. Using the human rights framework, the Coalition is spearheading national consumer education and consciousness building efforts around fair food, including fostering national movements of youth/student and communities of faith.

As a worker lead movement, the Coalition participates in solidarity actions with other anti-globalization, fair trade, corporate accountability-focused human rights, civil rights, social justice, and grassroots community groups across the United States and internationally. They are an active participating organization in the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, they attend the World Social Forum, and they organized Root Cause—a march of worker-led organizations during the FTAA talks in Miami, 2003 that forwarded the idea that those most affected by globalization must be the leaders in the fight to make it fair.

General aims of the NGO:

Based on the belief that **Consciousness + Commitment = Change**, the Coalition seeks an end to modern day slavery in the fields; fair wages and dignified working conditions for farmworkers; and corporate accountability for supply chain labor abuses.

The Coalition is deeply committed to building the broad and growing movement for fair food, fair trade, and global justice.

Reasons for the nomination: The National Taco Bell Boycott

Aims of the campaign:

Slavery in the United States

Since 1996, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of Justice have filed slavery charges for six different incidences of agricultural slavery in Florida alone—five with the help of the Coalition. In these six cases, over 1000 workers were freed from inhuman servitude at the hands of Florida farm owners and labor subcontractors.

Working with the US FBI, Coalition members have gone undercover to bring slave ring leaders to justice. They have driven vans full of enslaved farmworkers, taking them to safety. The Coalition further provides assistance to former slaves, helping prepare them for trial. Additionally, the Coalition holds regular worker meetings, organizes worker education events on slavery and workers rights, and operates a Low Power FM radio station, over which it broadcasts educational, rights-based, and

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cultural programming in five languages (including Spanish, Haitian Creole, and three Mayan languages indigenous to Guatemala and southern Mexico). The Coalition's respected role in communities of agricultural workers in Florida as a worker-led organization fighting slavery and its root cause, downward corporate economic pressure, makes it uniquely able to learn and inform government officials of instances of forced labor and other abuses.

Even Robert Mueller, head of the FBI under George W. Bush, lauded the Coalition's "valuable assistance in several FBI investigations involving migrant workers who were victims or witnesses of involuntary servitude and slavery, human trafficking, and other crimes."

The Coalition is currently involved in an additional forced labor investigation in Florida's potato industry.

Sweatshops in the Fields

Low wages and the violation of other core labor rights are endemic to the US agricultural industry. According to the United States Department of Labor, farmworkers earn an average of \$7,500 per year. For every 32 pounds of tomatoes each farmworker pick, they earn about 40 cents. This piecemeal payment has not changed since 1978 and represents a decrease of 65% in real wages over the last 25 years. These below-poverty wages are coupled with a lack of benefits, overtime pay, and the right to collectively bargain and organize. Notably, as wages have plummeted with inflation, slave cases have gone up—demonstrating the continuum of labor abuses and their interrelation.

Market Pressure, Government Inaction, and the Need for Corporate Accountability

Two phenomena have negatively impacted the Florida tomato industry in recent years: a restructuring of the American consumer food market and an increase in tomato imports from Mexico. As foodservice and large-scale retail have come to dominate American food sales, smaller tomato farmers have found themselves unable to competitively bargain with major buyers. An inability to devise the right contract or set the right price can put a farm out of business. While some farms have attempted to consolidate their operations as a way of staying competitive, giving way to large agribusiness, there is little doubt that efforts to cut costs have resulted in economic conditions highly conducive to substandard wages and even slavery. In the 90s, farmers' share in the retail price of produce fell from 41% to 25%. Due to the intense downward price pressures they currently face from purchasing corporations, even large corporate farms are ill equipped to stomach the economic costs of providing fair and adequate labor conditions for their workers.

These market realities combined with a shameful lack of legislative protection, unenforcement of existing protections, and the challenges faced by immigrants workers have left farmworkers in the US highly vulnerable. Farmworkers are either

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completely or partially excluded from all federal labor laws and health and safety protections, including the National Labor Relations Act (right to organize and collectively bargain) and the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Both state and federal labor agencies are reluctant to involve themselves in the quagmire of immigration issues and large corporate interests that are the hallmarks of today's US agricultural industry. The US government, despite President Bush's public opposition to human trafficking, has shirked its constitutional duty to abolish slavery and has left farmworkers out in the cold with few avenues through which to defend their own rights.

In this environment, sweatshop conditions in the fields have become the norm, and the use of forced labor has become a thinkable cost-saving 'business decision.'

Understanding both that it is the major purchasers, not the farmers, who hold the power and thus the responsibility to change the conditions in the fields, the Coalition is seeking to hold accountable food retailers, now the most powerful parties in American agriculture.

In 2001, the Coalition launched a national boycott of Taco Bell for its refusal to act on the human rights abuses in its supply chain. Taco Bell is a major buyer of Florida tomatoes and, as part of Yum! Brands, Inc. (the largest restaurant company in the world, including Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, KFC, Long John Silver's, and A&W), has substantial influence in the US fresh produce industry.

Description of the activities in the campaign:

The boycott of Taco Bell was a nation-wide campaign, tying together networks of activists, students, communities of faith, civil and labor rights groups, and grassroots community and social justice organizations from around the country. The campaign combined a targeted media and web-based campaign, which highlighted Taco Bell's complicity with slave labor in the United States, with large-scale actions including hunger strikes, marches, and protests.

The Coalition and its student ally group, the Student/Farmworker Alliance, built power among youth and students; 22 universities kicked Taco Bell off their campuses or prevented it from opening shop due to student protest, including the University of Chicago, the University of California at Los Angeles, and Notre Dame University. Over 300 colleges and 55 high schools had active student boycott campaigns ongoing when the boycott was finally resolved.

In addition to this student organizing, the Coalition allied itself with a diverse group of faith-based organizations, who endorsed and lent resources to the boycott, including main line religious communities such as the National Council of Churches, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the United Methodist Church.

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In 2002, 2004, and 2005, the Coalition organized national “Truth Tours” to Taco Bell and/or Yum Headquarters as well as regional mini-tours. These events spanned the country and involved public protests, solidarity actions with local activists, teach-ins and speaking events at which farmworkers and former slaves shared their stories, shed light on the larger system that creates abuses in the US agricultural industry, and called for consumer action.

This direct form of activism and organizing was combined with forward-looking media and internet outreach. The website included detailed descriptions of the Coalition and its work, as well as running accounts of the Taco Bell boycott. During the campaign, one was able to view video of events on the Truth Tours, read press releases about the campaign (from national, local, and indy media outlets) and track the campaign events as the Coalition moved across the country.

Through its innovative student, faith-based, and media savvy organizing, the campaign garnered the continuing interest of indy media outlets as well as extensive coverage by major national news sources such as the New York Times, National Public Radio, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, the New Yorker, the Nation, National Geographic, the Miami Herald and PBS Television.

The Coalition and their work has also been heralded by notable progressive leaders, such as former US President and Nobel Laureate Jimmy Carter, the US Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Eric Schlosser (author of [Fast Food Nation](#)), former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and President of Ireland Mary Robinson, and musician and activist Tom Morello.

For their courageous work, members of the Coalition have been awarded the NOW Woman of Courage Award, the Rolling Stone magazine/Brick Award for America’s Best Young Leader, and the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.

What was the result of the campaign (success of the campaign)?

The campaign resulted in a watershed agreement between Yum Brands and the Coalition, by which Yum Brands agreed to augment farmworker wages one cent for every pound of tomatoes purchased. This wage supplement—a nearly two-fold increase in farmworker wages—was accompanied by the first ever industry Code of Conduct to govern foodservice agricultural purchases.

The wage increase was an innovative and precedent setting admission of corporate responsibility. By adding a wage surcharge to each pound of tomatoes purchased, Yum Brands is absorbing the cost of higher labor standards in a way that is verifiable. By requiring transparency and cooperating with the Coalition, Yum Brands will ensure that the additional cent finds its way to actual farmworker wages. On the ground, when workers receive their checks, growers are required to include contact information for the Coalition, if workers have questions or concerns. This means that the purchasing corporation is facilitating worker organizing and participation with

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monitoring of their own pay and working conditions—in sum the multinational is encouraging worker voice. It is also a highly replicable and transparent system.

The Code of Conduct, which requires Yum Brands to limit its business to growers who adhere to pass the on the wage supplement and otherwise adhere to fair labor standards, creates a market incentive for farmers to improve their employment practices. Although Yum Brands is only one of many buyers, its size makes it a lucrative contract for produce growers who are willing to abide by the Code of Conduct. By setting an industry standard for produce purchasing, Yum Brands will encourage other major produce buyers to set similar standards, thus creating a market wide tendency towards fair labor: growers who want to sell their product will be required to vigilantly adhere to buyers' Codes of Conduct.

“We are pleased to lend our support to and work with the CIW to improve working and pay conditions for farmworkers in the Florida tomato fields. We recognize that Florida tomato workers do not enjoy the same rights and conditions as employees in other industries and there is a need for reform”—Emil Brolick, Taco Bell President

The above statement by Taco Bell's president, despite its understated tone, acknowledges publicly what the agreement between Yum Brands accomplishes in practice—that corporations play a crucial role in assuring (or deigning) the respect of the human rights of those far down their supply chains.

Which are the reasons for the success?

Like any major campaign, the Coalition's success stemmed in part from its resilience as an organization. The boycott of Taco Bell lasted for four years and the Coalition was unwilling to compromise on its major goals.

Thanks to its efforts to create a broad base of support, the Coalition was able to target Taco Bell and Yum Brands in several ways. The student groups mobilized their campuses creating a real threat to Taco Bell's sales. For obvious reasons, student campaigns resulting in the removal of Taco Bell from certain high school and college campuses were especially noteworthy. Religious groups added a level of moral persuasion that may have been particularly efficacious in changing opinions within the southern conservative religious ranks of Yum Brands' management.

The Coalition was able to tap such a diverse group of allies through its powerful first-person stories and incisive analysis of US socioeconomics. The Coalition's education initiatives, combined teach-ins, speaking events, and an innovative use of media, comprised of new participatory fora such as the internet and indy media and more traditional forms of communication (newspapers, television, radio).

By using the human rights framework the Coalition brought more attention to the human dignity that farmworkers deserve, by dint of being human. This allowed them respite from the strife-ridden ground of immigration and traditional union struggles,

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currently so embattled in the US. Their worker-led model, courageous anti-trafficking work, and ability to tell the stories of those often forgotten in American life (their own), the Coalition highlighted the moral and ethical implications of Yum Brands 'business decisions.' The decision to use the human rights framework was a conscious one that distinguishes the Coalition and the Taco Bell boycott from much of US organizing.

Follow-ups?

The current moment is crucial for the ongoing success of the Coalition's overall aim of improving agricultural working conditions in the United States. The Coalition is seeking to use the momentum from the victory over Taco Bell and Yum Brands to catalyze further reform in the foodservice and retail sectors. To do this, they are first targeting other foodservice giants, notably McDonalds, Burger King and Subway to agree to similar Code of Conduct and wage supplement to which Yum Brands acquiesced. McDonalds, a titan in the international fast-food industry makes for an obvious complement to Taco Bell.

The second set of targets includes major produce retailers like Wal-Mart, Publix, Costco, SuperValu and others. As an organization, Wal-Mart particularly represents many of the changes in the agricultural industry that have destroyed farmers. Wal-Mart has changed the game in produce, promoting higher consolidation through cutthroat price negotiations and long-term contracts. Garnering compliance from Wal-Mart therefore addresses not only a major buyer of produce, but also a leader in the agricultural reform that most threatens farmers and, consequently, farmworkers.

As the Coalition targets both foodservice and retail, its criticism remains driven by the concept of human rights. The human rights model broadens its approach and aspirations beyond local interests, linking the problems facing agricultural workers to living and working conditions worldwide. Moreover, one of the most innovative aspect of the Coalition's works is its ability to link economic rights to overall human rights in the ever more conservative and pro-market environment of the United States. The human rights framework allows the Coalition to convey that fair wages and the end of slavery are not things that corporations may support if they wish, or favorable notions if the market allows, but instead the *rights of all people*. Interestingly, the Coalition found this idea to be a powerful lens for organizing in communities in the US. However, it remains at the forefront of legal thinking, as the United Nations is currently discussing the role of corporate accountability to international law, a notion the US Government virulently opposes.

Strikingly, Jonathan Blum, senior vice president of Yum Brands, registered the message that corporations are accountable to human rights (and the decisive victory the Coalition had made over his company) when he remarked at the press conference announcing the agreement between Taco Bell and the Coalition, "human rights are universal and we hope others will follow our company's lead."

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The Public Eye Award would greatly benefit the Coalition in its cultivation of broader international attention and affirmation of the duty of corporations to promote, respect, and ensure the human rights of all within their sphere of influence. Further, while the Coalition's work was engendered by a domestic problem, the cause of agricultural labor and retailer pressure upon suppliers extends beyond all known borders in a world spun anew by the forces of globalization. Both products and labor in agricultural are frequently outsourced by organizations like McDonalds and Wal-Mart, whose products, in turn, are manufactured and sold in the United States and abroad. Facing the problem of slavery in agricultural labor in the US means necessarily viewing and articulating reform in a context that addresses dramatic changes in the global economy.

The Coalition is attempting to develop a system of monitoring adherence to wage supplement and other agreed upon labor standards. Collaborating with international actors has and will continue to be indispensable in the search for a verification apparatus capable of ensuring compliance to labor standards in several different produce markets, each comprising differently sized and situated actors (including diverse produce buyers, growers, and other intermediaries).

As important, the Coalition is seeking to build stronger ties to other fair trade, migrant worker, corporate accountability-focused human rights, civil rights, social justice, and grassroots community groups outside the US and, in so doing, support a broader global movement for social justice and corporate accountability.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition would specifically benefit from the Public Eye Award and the international attention that it brings.

Information for the organisers:

Nomination submitted by:

Name of organisation: Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights

Name of contact person: Amanda Shanor

Address:

*1367 Connecticut Ave NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
USA*

Email: shanor@rfkmemorial.org

Phone: +1 (202) 463.7575 extension 224

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Award Ceremony in Davos

The NGO that wins the Positive Award will be given the opportunity to present itself and the successful campaign in Davos. Travel, accommodation and expenses will be covered by the organisers.

Option 1: You nominated your own organisation

- If you win the Positive Award, would you be willing to send a person to Davos at the end of January 2006? (If yes, please tick)

Name of this person:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Option 2: If you nominated another NGO, could you please indicate a contact person at the organisation?

Name of the person: Laura Germino or Lucas Benitez

Address: 215F West Main Street
Immokalee, Florida 34142

Email: laura@ciw-online.org or lucas@ciw-online.org

Phone: +1 (239) 657.8311 or +1 (239) 657.1776

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ABOUT CIW

Consciousness + Commitment = Change: How and why we are organizing...



The CIW is a community-based worker organization. Our members are largely Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs throughout the state of Florida.

We strive to build our strength as a community on a basis of reflection and analysis, constant attention to coalition building across ethnic divisions, and an ongoing investment in leadership development to help our members continually develop their skills in community education and organization.

From this basis we fight for, among other things: a fair wage for the work we do, more respect on the part of our bosses and the industries where we work, better and cheaper housing, stronger laws and stronger enforcement against those who would violate workers' rights, the right to organize on our jobs without fear of retaliation, and an end to indentured servitude in the fields.

From the people, for the people: Who we are...

Southwest Florida is the state's most important center for agricultural production, and Immokalee is the state's largest farmworker community. As such, the majority of our more than 2,500 members work for large agricultural corporations in the tomato and citrus harvests, traveling along the entire East Coast following the harvest in season. Many local



residents, and thus many of our members, move out of agriculture and into other low wage industries that are important in our area, including the construction, nursery, and tourist industries. The community is split, roughly, along the following ethnic/national origin lines: Mexican 50%, Guatemalan 30%, Haitian 10% and other nationalities (mostly African-American) 10%.



We are all leaders: Our history...

We began organizing in 1993 as a small group of workers who met weekly in a room borrowed from a local church to discuss how to better our community and our lives. In a relatively short time we have managed to bring about significant, concrete change.

Combining community-wide work stoppages with intense public pressure -- including three general strikes, an unprecedented month-long hunger strike by six of our members in 1998, and an historic 230-mile march from Ft. Myers to Orlando in 2000 -- our early organizing ended over twenty years of declining wages in the tomato industry.

By 1998, we had won industry-wide raises of 13-25% (translating into several million dollars annually for the community in increased wages) and a new-found political and social respect from the outside world.

Those raises brought the tomato picking piece-rate back to pre-1980 levels (the piece-rate had fallen *below* those levels over the course of the intervening two decades), but wages remained below poverty level and continuing improvement was slow in coming. At the same time, the phenomenon of modern-day slavery was establishing a foothold in Florida's fields. While continuing to organize for fairer wages, we also turned our



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attention to attacking involuntary servitude in our state. From 1997-2000, we helped bring three modern-day slavery operations to justice, resulting in freedom for over 500 workers from debt bondage.

Since then, our Anti-Slavery Campaign has earned national and international recognition, based on its innovative program of worker-led investigation and human rights education, and a track record of real success. Our latest victory against indentured servitude came in November of 2002, when three crewleaders from Lake Placid, FL, were convicted of forcing 700 workers into slave labor in Florida's citrus groves. They were sentenced in May, 2004, to a total of 31 years and nine months in federal prison, and were ordered to forfeit \$3 million in proceeds from their immigrant smuggling operation. The case was the fifth major modern-day slavery case in the past six years in which the CIW has played a key role in the discovery, investigation, and prosecution of the operation.



The CIW is also a co-founder of the national Freedom Network Institute on Human Trafficking. We are Regional Coordinators for the Southeastern US for the Institute, conducting trainings for law enforcement and social service personnel in how to identify and assist slavery victims, as well as advocating for the full prosecution of all traffickers, including corporations and their sub-contractors. At the state level, we are members of the US Attorney Anti-Trafficking Task Force as well as Florida State University's statewide Working Group against Human Trafficking through its Center for the Advancement of Human Rights.

In 2001, we turned a new page in our organizing, launching the first-ever farmworker boycott of a major fast-food company -- the national boycott of Taco Bell -- calling on the fast-food giant to take responsibility for human rights abuses in the fields where its produce is grown and picked. The fast-food industry as a whole -- including industry giants such as McDonalds, one of the nation's leading consumers of lettuce, tomatoes, apples, and pickled cucumbers -- purchases a tremendous volume of fruits and vegetables, leveraging its buying power to demand the lowest possible prices from its suppliers. Through this unprecedented market power, the fast-food industry exerts a powerful downward pressure on wages and working conditions in its suppliers' operations.



The Taco Bell boycott gained tremendous student, religious, labor, and community support in the nearly four years since its inception, including the establishment of boycott committees in nearly all 50 states and a fast-growing movement to "Boot the Bell" from college and high school campuses across the country. Large scale national actions helped move the boycott forward. For example, in 2003 we organized a 10-day hunger strike outside of Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine, CA -- one of the largest hunger strikes in US labor history, with over 75 farmworkers and students fasting during the 10-day period -- galvanizing the support of national religious, labor, and student organizations and thousands of individuals. During that strike we posed Taco Bell's executives one question: "Can Taco Bell guarantee its customers that the tomatoes in its tacos were not picked by forced labor?" They had no answer. In 2004 and 2005, we organized cross-country tours featuring marches and actions in Louisville, KY, and Irvine, CA, lifting the campaign to new heights.



In March 2005, amidst growing pressure from students, churches, and communities throughout the country, Taco Bell agreed to meet all of our demands to improve wages and working conditions for Florida tomato pickers in its supply chain. The boycott victory was celebrated by observers including former President Jimmy Carter, former guitarist for Rage Against the Machine, Tom Morello, and the 21 members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, who said of the accord, "This is a truly historic agreement, marking perhaps the single greatest advance for farm workers since the early struggles of the United Farm Workers. To the the workers and organizers of CIW, we express our deepest gratitude for their determined work for their own dignity and their historic contribution to advancing the cause of labor rights." This precedent-setting victory now gives us a strong foundation for pursuing deeper

change throughout the entire fast-food industry and, in turn, the Florida agricultural industry. [Click here](#) to read a detailed analysis of this historic agreement.

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Over the past several years, through campaigns like the boycott and our anti-slavery work, Immokalee has evolved from being one of the poorest, most politically powerless communities in the country to become today a new and important public presence with forceful, committed leadership directly from the base of our community -- young, immigrant workers forging a future of livable wages and modern labor relations in Florida's fields. In recognition of their work, three CIW members were recently presented the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, the first time the award has gone to a US-based organization in its 20 years of existence.



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