

# Writing a Campaign for Fair Food Op/Ed

## A Guide for Jewish Leaders by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Thank you for agreeing to write an OpEd on the Campaign for Fair Food. The guide below will walk you through key talking points and background and make suggestions about angle and structure.

### KEY POINTS TO REITERATE:

- Thanks to the successes of the Fair Food Program, conditions have changed significantly for workers. If you choose to talk about slavery, its important to talk about it as an extreme condition of the past, and that the CIW's work has taken the industry from "ground zero" for human trafficking to zero cases of human trafficking since the implementation of the Fair Food Program. This makes the Fair Food Program the most successful trafficking *prevention* program in the country.
- Rachel and Elena need a chance to edit OpEds before they are published. Please be sure to give us adequate lead time and let us know what your deadline is.
- The Jewish/faith framing is important because it answers the questions (1) why is a rabbi/Jewish leader writing about this issue and (2) why should Jews/people of faith care about this from their faith tradition.

### LANGUAGE ON CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR FOOD

#### Begin with a compelling hook. This could include:

- Personal experience, like visiting Immokalee or participating in an action
- A turning point in the campaign (like a campaign victory from the past you participated in)
- A relevant holiday, like Passover, Sukkot, Tu Bishvat, Yom Kippur, etc.
- A relevant news event
- A major moment for the CIW, i.e., the distribution of the film Food Chains, an award, etc.
- Something witty, ironic or unexpected
- Something you need about the CIW in your congregation (like taking your Hebrew School students to do an action at Wendy's)

## Background on the Fair Food Program

- In 2010, the CIW and Florida's tomato growers signed an agreement that gave birth to the Fair Food Program (FFP), a groundbreaking model for social responsibility based on a unique collaboration among farmworkers, Florida tomato growers, and 12 participating buyers, such as Subway, Whole Foods, and Walmart. The Program is the first comprehensive, verifiable and sustainable approach to ensuring better wages and working conditions in America's agricultural fields.
- The Program is founded upon compliance with a human-rights-based Code of Conduct involving **six main elements**. You may not be able to mention all of these, but it is important to stress that the FFP includes both a wage increase AND human rights protections in the fields:
  1. A pay increase supported by a "penny per pound" premium paid by Participating Buyers;
  2. Zero tolerance for forced labor, and sexual assault and other abusive conduct;
  3. Worker-to-worker education sessions carried out by the CIW on the farms and on company time to insure workers are aware of their new rights and responsibilities;
  4. A worker-triggered complaint resolution mechanism (including a 24-hour hotline staffed by the FFSC) comprising timely investigation, corrective action plans, and, if necessary, suspension of a farm's Participating Grower status, and thereby its ability to sell to Participating Buyers;
  5. Health and Safety Committees on every farm to give workers a structured voice in the shape of their work environment; and
  6. Ongoing auditing of the farms to insure compliance with each element of the FFP.
- **At the systemic level, the Fair Food Program has already revolutionized the Florida tomato industry.** An April 2014 front-page *New York Times* article detailed how the industry has gone "from being the worst to the best" work environment in US agriculture, ([see here](#)) while a Washington Post op/ed called the Fair Food Program "one of the great human rights success stories of our day." ([see here](#))
- Where once a culture of threats, violence, rampant sexual harassment and frequent forced labor prevailed, today, a growing sense of partnership predominates, distinguishing the industry from its competition based on a burgeoning respect for human rights.

To give just one example, there have been no cases of forced labor on farms participating in the Fair Food Program since its inception in 2010. In a country, state and industry with an uninterrupted 300-year history of forced labor – from chattel slavery to convict leasing, debt bondage, and the modern-day slavery operations – this is a truly unprecedented transformation.
- The documentary film *Food Chains*, which profiles the Fair Food Program, just premiered at Tribeca Film Festival. The film is produced by Eva Longoria and Eric Schlosser, with narration by Forest Whittaker.



## History of farmworker exploitation and poverty in Florida

Historically, farmworkers have faced some of the lowest wages and harshest working conditions in the United States in order to harvest the food on our plates:\*

1. **Stagnant, sub-poverty wages:** Florida tomato harvesters are still paid by the piece. The prevailing piece rate today is 50 cents for every 32-lbs of tomatoes a worker picks, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged since 1980. As a result of that stagnation, a worker today must pick nearly 2.5 tons of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday – twice the amount a worker had to pick to earn minimum wage thirty years ago. Most farmworkers today earn less than \$12,000 a year.
2. **Denial of fundamental labor rights:** Florida farmworkers have no right to overtime pay, no benefits and no right to organize in order to improve these conditions.
3. **Modern-day slavery:** In the most extreme cases, workers have been forced to labor against their will through the use or threat of physical violence.

*\* While farmworkers have historically faced these conditions, however, we want to be clear that the Fair Food Program is ushering in a dramatic transformation of these conditions, and that to strengthen and expand these gains, we must continue with the Campaign for Fair Food.*

## WENDY'S CAMPAIGN

### Why is Wendy's the current campaign target?

- Wendy's is one of the largest buyers of tomatoes in the restaurant industry, an industry that for decades purchased cheap tomatoes whose harvest relied on the exploitation of workers. Given its market power, Wendy's has not only an opportunity, but an obligation to work with the tomato industry to be part of the solution to Florida's longstanding history of farmworker abuse and poverty.
- Of the five largest fast food corporations in the country – McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, Taco Bell (Yum! Brands), and Wendy's – Wendy's is the only one not participating in the Fair Food Program.
- As Wendy's attempts to modernize its brand, it must realize that it will remain "old fashioned" until it demonstrates respect for human rights and worker participation, integral to the vision of what today's consumers expect and demand.
- The current CEO of Wendy's, Emil Brolick, was the president of Taco Bell in 2005 when it became the first company to sign a Fair Food Agreement. Surely, if under Mr. Brolick's leadership Taco Bell decided to partner with the CIW, Wendy's can also take this important step.
- For the most part, T'ruah has received very little resistance to the fact that it is targeting a non-kosher restaurant chain. However, if you anticipate that this will be a problem, focus on the rights of workers to be paid a just wage in Jewish tradition.

## What does Wendy's say (aka corporate talking points) and how does CIW respond to this message?

1. Wendy's says it is paying a premium on its tomato purchases. The truth is, whatever premium Wendy's pays is not the Fair Food Premium, it is not being monitored by the third-party [Fair Foods Standards Council](#), and it is not going to address farmworkers' grinding poverty.
2. Wendy's also claims its suppliers already belong to the Fair Food Program. This statement is both unverifiable and meaningless because Wendy's, unlike its competitors in the Fair Food Program, does not have to report their Florida tomato purchases to the Fair Food Standards Council nor suspend their purchases from any participating grower found out of compliance with the Fair Food Code of Conduct - two critical pieces of a Fair Food Agreement that give the Program its teeth.

Note: You probably do not want to repeat Wendy's language but instead incorporate the responses into your OpEd (i.e. anticipate the objections). This is also helpful when speaking to a store manager.

## T'ruah History with Wendy's Campaign

You will likely not use this timeline in your OpEd but it can help provide background for Jewish continued involvement.

Dec 2012	T'ruah sends private letter to Wendy's urging them to join the CIW's Fair Food Program and avoid a public campaign. No response.
Jan 2013	CIW announces public campaign with Wendy's, asking for a one-month period of store visits and letters without public action, in hopes of a response. No response.
Feb 2013	Public actions at Wendy's begin.
May 2013	Wendy's issues first <a href="#">response</a> to justify non-participation in Fair Food Program. CIW <a href="#">responds</a> .
May 2013	15 rabbis with T'ruah join Kerry Kennedy, CIW and other allies outside of Wendy's Annual Shareholder Meeting in NYC.
Nov 2013	CIW receives Roosevelt Institute Freedom from Want Award. Past laureates such as Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi.
Nov 2013	36 "tomato rabbis," all of whom have participated in a T'ruah delegation to Immokalee, send private letter to Nelson Peltz, Chairman of the Board of Wendy's, requesting to convene a meeting between him and CIW. T'ruah requests response before Human Rights Shabbat. No response.
Dec 2013	Tomato rabbis publish the letter Nelson Peltz publicly. In honor of Human Rights Jan 2014: 150 rabbis send letter to Wendy's CEO Emil Brolick. No response.

- Jan 2014 CIW announces that Walmart has joined the Fair Food Program. Agreement signifies profound strengthening of rights for workers and first moment where CIW can consider expanding rights now afforded to tomato pickers to crops outside of tomatoes and fields outside of Florida.
- April 2014 Del Monte farms joins Fair Food Program.
- April 2014 On front page of *New York Times*, Fair Food Program called “best workplace-monitoring program... in the U.S.”
- April 2014 Documentary film *Food Chains*, profiling Fair Food Program, premieres at Tribeca Film Festival. Film is produced by Eva Longoria and Eric Schlosser, with narration by Forest Whittaker.
- May 2014 On the occasion of Wendy’s next Annual Shareholder Meeting and 6<sup>th</sup> T’ruah delegation to Immokalee, tomato rabbis republish letter to Nelson Peltz.
- July 2014 Visit to Peltz’s office at Trian Fund Management led by T’ruah Summer Fellows, including an action outside the offices.

## PUBLIX CAMPAIGN

### Why is Publix Supermarkets being targeted?

- Publix is Florida’s hometown grocer and an enormous purchaser of Florida tomatoes. Publix executives have no doubt awoken to the headlines emerging from Florida’s fields over the last two decades – first, covering countless forms of abuse and, in extreme cases, modern slavery; now, covering the dramatic sea change of human rights in the industry.
- Publix Supermarkets has staunchly refused to join the Fair Food Program for five years, even going so far as to advertise purchasing from some of the few farms where workers are denied access to the Program’s higher standards and the “penny per pound” bonus. They haven’t once sat down for a conversation with the CIW.
- In those five years, the Fair Food Program has transformed from a vision to a reality; it was recently lauded as “the best workplace-monitoring program... in the U.S.” on the front page of the *New York Times*. When such a proven solution to abuse in Publix’s supply chain exists, the corporation’s refusal to join is unconscionable.
- Publix is expanding their stores throughout the Southeast. But Publix cannot expand their stores without expanding their commitment to human rights, and they will not be accepted as the neighborhood grocer while continuing to shirk their responsibility to their own neighbors in Florida.

## What does Publix say and how has CIW responded?

1. Publix calls the growing Fair Food collaboration among buyers, tomato growers and farmworkers "a labor dispute." In fact, The Fair Food Program is the first large-scale *partnership* of its kind for real, lasting social accountability in the U.S. produce industry – unless Publix would label any process in which workers have a voice a "labor dispute."
2. Publix says that the penny should be "put in the price" the industry charges for tomatoes. That is, in fact, exactly how the Fair Food Program works. The Fair Food Premium is put into the price charged to Walmart, for example, by its suppliers, who then back the premium out and pass it on to their workers as a line item bonus in their weekly paychecks, a process tracked and audited by the Fair Foods Standards Council, the independent organization that monitors the Program.
3. Publix says it won't "pay employees of other companies directly for their labor." As put by the Honorable Judge Laura Safer Espinoza, a former New York Supreme Court Justice and Director of the Fair Foods Standards Council, told the Orlando Sentinel: "No corporate buyer pays a farmworker directly in the Fair Food Program. They pay a premium that gets passed down the supply chain to the workers, who are paid by the growers who employ them."

## HOW DO I GET MY OPED PUBLISHED?

- ✓ Send your completed piece to Rachel and Elena so they can fact-check your piece and ensure that its message reflects the current reality of the campaign. For instance, in the last three years, the message has changed dramatically – from shining a light on modern-slavery occurring as the extreme abuse to holding up the Fair Food Program for finally reaching the Gold Standard of slavery prevention.
- ✓ Find the email address of the editor of the editorial section of the news outlet where you would like to get your piece published (try the "contact" section). If you can't find it, you can call the newsroom and ask for the correct email address via the editorial department. In case you get an editor on the phone, be prepared to deliver a short, pithy pitch about why the op-ed is newsworthy.
- ✓ If you are pitching to a Jewish newspaper, Rachel can check whether T'ruah has a previous relationship with that paper and a person to contact directly. If that paper has already published a CIW-related OpEd, she can help you work to find a new hook.
- ✓ Send an email to the appropriate email address with your pitch in a few clear, concise lines (why this is important and timely), your relevant credentials, and the finished piece both pasted below the pitch and attached.
- ✓ If you don't hear back: Depending on the shelf-life of the piece, after a few days, send a follow-up email to the editor saying that you'd still like to run your piece in their publication, but since the piece is timely, if you don't hear from them by the end of the day (week, whatever) you will assume they have passed, and you'll be submitting your op-ed elsewhere. You can also give a follow-up call.