



PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK
Presbytery of Grand Canyon

Slavery in the Fields

Modern-day slavery still exists for farm workers at farms that are not associated with the Fair Food Program, including beatings, no breaks, withholding of medical care, sexual assault and long days without pay. A five-day, fifty-mile march began in a tiny farming area where farmworkers had until recently been kept isolated behind locked gates and barbed wire, and ended on March 18, 2023 in Palm Beach, where marchers carried their message of safety, freedom and fair wages to the entire nation. According to NPR member station WGCU, farm worker Lupe Gonzalo lived in fear of speaking up. One day, it was just too much. “She asked for some water. She was told to drink from the ditch. This is why Lupe marches.”

Most grocery chains and restaurants now support the Fair Food Program, but Wendy’s, and grocery giants Kroger and Publix do not. Under the Fair Food Program, workers know that there will be people inspecting the farms and informing them of their rights. Retailers must also agree to pay an additional one penny per pound for the tomatoes they buy. This money comes back to the farmworkers.

What Can You Do

Support the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in the Fair Food Program with donations. They have rooted out some of the worst offenders in US agriculture, but the work is not done.

Google the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to sign up for updates on their campaigns, anti-slavery program, and more.

Think mindfully about the fruit and vegetables you eat, that may have been picked by workers living in involuntary servitude and violence. Encourage in your own way slavery-free farms and markets.

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