

November 22, 2011

Ending Our Traditional Silence

We are women, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Yes, sirs, we are women and workers who are tired of oppression. Today we seek to end the cycle of imposition, protesting out of necessity to end the ongoing silence. For this reason, we are gathered together with the CIW in front of the doors of Publix. We ask for your attention because we want your company to work with us and participate in the Campaign for Fair Food.

This community of women is part of the forces already in motion calling on Publix to join with its tomato suppliers, who have already joined, and sign agreements in support of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

We will no longer be victims of silence. Our ideas are rooted in the changes that are now occurring in the fields of Immokalee. It is just to support a dignified life for our children and a raise of just one more cent for farmworkers.

Over the years we have formed the base of the family. And although our voices have not been heard, we have not lost our faith that change will come. Now the new Fair Food Code of Conduct that is being implemented allows for an end to unequal treatment based on gender as well as an end to the labor abuses that have been common in the fields. Many of these abuses affect us uniquely as women, and that is why today we ask Publix for its support.

A penny more in our wages means very much to us—it means a little bit more food in our pots and more respect for our work, which allows us to live with a bit more dignity. For all of these reasons we ask that Publix executives sign a Fair Food agreement. We may be women. We may be farmworkers. We may haul a 32-pound bucket of tomatoes for 10 hours straight. But, it's because of all this that Publix is able to sell its fresh produce, picked by people in Immokalee.

As a major purchaser for Florida tomatoes, we will continue to demand your cooperation. Until when? Until you become one of the corporations that is supporting our struggle as workers and members of the Coalition.

Publix: Hear our cry for justice. We want fair wages. We want the implementation of basic rights for farmworkers and our families. As mothers we would like to be able to provide an adequate Thanksgiving-Day meal for our children, earned with our own sweat, and not to have to wait in line this Thanksgiving and depend on charity and handouts. Today we end our traditional silence and publically express our reasons and feelings.

Thanks to each of the *compañeras* who unites her whisper together with the cries of the CIW, we will win the campaign with Publix. With come together in a unity of women and workers, students, and the people of faith that pray with us. We know that the Divine protects all of humanity regardless of its nationality or social class.

On behalf of the CIW and its Women's Group,
-Carmen Esquivel