



Fair Food Curriculum

High School

By Eric Rhoda and Jill Rumpf

A student marches with the CIW for fair food!

Focus Statement: (1) To introduce the learners to the situation of the Immokalee workers and the injustices surrounding it. (2) To challenge the learners to hear God's call to do justice, and respond.

Scripture: Micah 6:8

Preparation:

- Arrange a way to view the “Con Estos Manos/With These Hands” video found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlcIAfkXklk> ; this video can also be ordered on DVD by contacting the Coalition of Immokalee Workers at workers@ciw-online.org or 239-657-8311
- 2 large buckets (no handles if possible) filled with 32 lbs. (fill with bags of rice or canned goods that can be donated later)
- envelopes
- blank paper
- pens for letter writing.

Gathering

- **Read Micah 6.8**
- **Brainstorming Activity**
 - As a group brainstorm a definition of justice. Don't worry about “correct” answers at this point; the point is just to get them thinking about it. As they throw out ideas write them on a whiteboard/chalkboard/newsprint.
 - What is justice? What words come to your mind?
 - Justice is when things that are wrong, are made right. Justice is when there is no exploitation, no lack of equality. It is God's intention for creation.

Introduction & Engagement (15-20 minutes)

- **Discussion**
 - Lead a short discussion about the fast food industry.
 - **Questions to consider:** What do you know about the fast food industry? What makes it so appealing? (fast & cheap) How many of you eat fast

food regularly? Why/Why not? Do you know of any justice issues involved with the fast food industry?

- **Explanation:** Fast food chains are by far the most popular restaurants. The food is cheap because the companies don't pay their employees very much, and they don't pay very much for their ingredients. Because fast food corporations are so big, they purchase enormous amounts of tomatoes. Because they purchase so many tomatoes, they demand that these tomatoes be sold to them at a very low cost.
- The companies that grow the tomatoes are trying to make a profit too, so how much do you think the farmworkers that plant and pick the ingredients get paid?
- Show "Con Estos Manos/With These Hands" video and then ask students to discuss their reactions to it.
 - **Questions to consider:** How does this video make you feel? What did you notice about the hands? What kind of work would make your hands look this way? Hard/easy work?
 - **Explanation:** The video shows the hands of tomato pickers in Immokalee, FL. (Immokalee sounds like "broccoli") Obviously, it is hard work! Workers typically work 12 hours/day, 6 days/week, filling 32 lb. buckets and carrying them to a truck over and over.
- **Bucket activity**
 - Split group into two teams. Each group lines up in a row. The bucket is passed down the line; once it reaches the end the last person in line runs the bucket to the front and assumes the first place in line, so the person who was originally first in line is now second in line. Each line repeats this process until the line is in its original order. **Note of caution:** Be careful, 32lbs. is really heavy! Make sure no one gets hurt.
 - **Explanation:** By the end of a *good* day tomato pickers have picked and carried over 2 tons of tomatoes (about 125 buckets).
 - **Discussion Question:** How much do you think this kind of work would pay?
 - **Explanation:** 40-45 cents/buckets → At *most* \$50/day (for picking 2 tons), \$10,000/year. Far below poverty level. An "average" day workers earn around \$35.¹
 - **Brainstorm:** What are some things that cost \$50? (i.e. Playstation game, 2 t-shirts from Gap/Abercrombie/Hollister)
 - So, is \$35/day a lot of money?

¹ OK. The truth is, there is no "average" day, we're picking a reasonable figure. What a farmworker earns can vary widely each day – that's why the US Department of Labor studies workers wages over entire years, not days. But we wanted students to begin to imagine what it might be like to earn a poverty wage. It's important to remember that workers are day laborers. That means they have to seek work each day, they are not guaranteed it. Some days they are not selected to go and pick. So on those days they earn nothing. How much a worker earns picking on a given day varies greatly according to many factors including weather, strength of the worker, whether it's the first round of picking the harvest or the third round when there is far less fruit on the vine, and distance workers must travel to the fields which are 20-200 miles away from Immokalee.

- Why are farmworkers wages so low?
 - Explanation: farmworkers' wages have not changed in more than 25 years – they earn today what they earned in 1978. Because wages have remained stagnant and there's been inflation, pickers now have to harvest almost twice as many tomatoes as they did then in order to purchase the things they and their families need to survive (food, housing, clothing).
 - If growers want to supply the fast-food industry, they need to be able to sell tomatoes very cheaply – below market cost. And because these growers still have to pay companies like Monsanto the going rate for seeds and John Deere the going rate for tractors, the only place they can hold down costs is in the area of labor. So fast food companies not only profit from farmworker poverty (in the form of cheap tomatoes), they actually have a hand in creating that poverty through their high-volume, low-cost purchasing practices.

Reflection & Application (15-20 minutes)

- **Discussion**
 - Remember our definition of justice that we came up with earlier. What would justice look like in this situation with the farm workers in Immokalee?
 - (Let the students toss out their own ideas of how the situation should be changed between the farm workers and the fast food companies)
 - **Explanation:** The farm workers themselves actually came up with their own idea of how to get justice. They formed a group called Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). After many years of trying to get growers to raise their wages, they realized that the growers were squeezed by the fast food companies. So they decided to try and get fast food companies to pay them a more livable wage. After all, they were the source of the demand for cheap tomatoes and they were the company profiting the most. The workers asked that fast food companies pay them 1 penny more per pound of tomatoes they picked, which would almost double their daily wage! The farmworkers went first to Taco Bell, because they had evidence that the company was purchasing the tomatoes they picked.
 - How do you think Taco Bell responded? (let students answer) At first they said that it wasn't their problem or their fault. Taco Bell said it couldn't interfere in the business practices of their suppliers. But the reality is they interfere all the time to demand tomatoes of

- a certain size and quality and to require certain health and safety measures be met. Further, they had standards in place for the treatment of farm animals, but not for human beings. For four years consumers, including church people, joined the farmworkers in boycotting Taco Bell, demanding they work with the CIW to improve wages and working conditions. They wrote letters, marched, met with the company, and refrained from eating Taco Bell products. And in March of 2005, Taco Bell finally agreed to work with the CIW, to pay a penny more a pound directly to the farmworkers, and develop a code of conduct together with the farmworkers that would involve the CIW in its enforcement.
- So, why does this matter to us, right here in our church which is not in Immokalee, FL? None of us are fast food company executives...so why should this matter to us?
 - **Explanation:** One reason is because whenever we buy and eat fast food, we are participating in this system which ultimately exploits the farm workers.
 - But, the bigger reason is that as we read in our Scripture verse from Micah today, as Christians, God calls us to work for justice in places where there is none. As Christians when we work for justice, it is a witness to those around us that God desires justice. If we aren't working for justice we're not accurately showing who God is.
 - So, how can we participate in God's desire for justice?
 - Give students the opportunity to generate their own ideas for participating in the work of the CIW/farm workers.
- **Application Activity**
 - Letter writing to Burger King
 - **Explanation:** The CIW has already succeeded in getting Taco Bell and McDonald's to pay an extra penny per lb. of tomatoes. Then in May 2007, the parent company of Taco Bell, Yum! Brands, decided to voluntarily expand its agreement with the CIW to include all of its other brands: KFC, Pizza Hut, Long John Silver's and A&W Restaurants. Now the CIW and its allies are focusing on Burger King. So far, Burger King has refused to do this. The CIW is asking people to write letters to Burger King telling them that they support the CIW's campaign. So today, we're going to do that. (Have example letter on hand).
Individually address letters to:
Mr. John Chidsey, CEO
Burger King Corporation
5505 Blue Lagoon Drive
Miami, FL 33126

Closing (5-10 minutes)

- Read Teresa of Avila quote: “Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out upon the world, ours are the feet with which he goes about doing good, ours are the hands with which he blesses his people.”
- Have students break into pairs or groups of 3 and write their own *short* “hands” prayer. (i.e.- praying for their own hands to participate in God’s work; for the hands of the farm workers; for the hands of the CIW members; for the hands of consumers like us; for the hands of the fast food companies – that they would be extended to the CIW in partnership)
- Have students come back together and pray, each group reads their own prayer as part of the large group prayer.
- **Option:** Give students a handout to take home with additional ways that they can be involved and participate in the work for justice with the CIW.
 - Link to: CIW’s website: www.ciw-online.org , the PC(USA) Campaign for Fair Food website: www.pcusa.org/fairfood , “Hands” video on YouTube. Encourage the students to link to these sites on their own MySpace/Facebook pages, blogs, etc. and share them with others
 - Blog about the campaign
 - Write an article in your student newspaper
 - Tell their friends, parents, teachers, etc. about the CIW and Burger King. Encourage them to write letters telling Burger King that they want the company to work with the CIW just as Taco Bell and McDonald’s already have. Hand out pre-printed postcards for them to sign and send to the company. These are available by emailing workers@ciw-online.org .
 - Log on to www.ciw-online.org and www.pcusa.org/fairfood regularly to check on the status of the campaign and to look for other ways to be involved.
 - **PRAY!**

P.S. The PC(USA) Campaign for Fair Food would love to share the prayers your group has written. Please feel free to send them along to the Rev. Noelle Damico who coordinates the Campaign for Fair Food at ndamico@ctr.pcusa.org .