

## Come Change the World with the Church on the Edge (First Presbyterian-Edgewater)



### Why Fairness in Flowers

Have you ever thought about what is behind the pretty petals in your bouquet? According to the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), the flowers in your vase today were probably in the ground half way around the world on large plantations, just a few days ago. Did you know that 50% of the US floral imports are from Bogota, Colombia and the US imports 45% of Ecuador's cut flowers?<sup>1</sup>

ILRF reports that Colombian flower workers are 'primarily young women, many of which are heads of household, who endure dismal working conditions and poverty wages.'<sup>2</sup> They further cite the use of over 127 pesticides, many banned in the US and Canada as toxic and carcinogenic.<sup>3</sup> Workers on these plantations frequently endure low wages, long working hours, and in Ecuador sometimes child labor is even used. Recently, workers have been fired from their jobs on Colombian plantations for trying to unionize to improve their working conditions.<sup>4</sup>



Photo: ILRF

### How You Can Help

How can you tell if the flowers you are purchasing are produced in safe working conditions with the farmers and laborers paid a fair wage? There are several organizations that are certifying the flower industry for fair trade and labor practices as well as organic growing techniques. The organic companies include Organic Bouquet, Veriflora and FFP, which ensures that the flowers are produced without pesticides but does not necessarily ensure good working conditions; and Transfair USA is working on a Fair Trade certification for flowers, due to begin in late 2007. Fair Labor Standards help respect core labor rights to implement protective measures to protect the health and safety of workers and provide and improve employee benefits.<sup>5</sup>

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*Pictures and Fairness in Flowers logo and information used with permission of International Labor Relations Fund*

For more information please consult these websites: [www.ilrf.org](http://www.ilrf.org) and [www.laborrights.org/project/flowers\\_index.htm](http://www.laborrights.org/project/flowers_index.htm)

<sup>1</sup> [www.laborrights.org/projects/flowers\\_index.htm](http://www.laborrights.org/projects/flowers_index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> [www.ilrf.org](http://www.ilrf.org)

**Church on the Edge (First Presbyterian-Edgewater)  
710 Undercliff Avenue at Sterling Place, Edgewater NJ 07020 (212) 224-9116**

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Photo: ILRF

### **Taking Action**

When you purchase flowers that are BOTH fair trade certified and also organic, you ensure the workers are working in safe conditions and are treated fairly. Don't let the lives of the flower workers fade along with the petals of the flowers. Here are steps you can take to change the world for others!

*Be an educated consumer and ask questions about the products you purchase.*

*Encourage your local flower sellers to get educated on Transfair USA's upcoming fair trade flower certification standards.*

*Be informed on the impacts of US Trade policies.*

*Participate in the ILRF Fairness in Flowers campaign*

### **Five Questions to Ask Your Florist<sup>6</sup>**

You can help support ILRF's Fairness in Flowers campaign and ensure just and humane working conditions for the workers who produce your flowers. When buying flowers for holidays and celebrations ask your florist these 5 key questions:

- 1) In what country were your flowers produced?
- 2) Are you aware of the working conditions on the plantations in that country?
- 3) Do the workers on the plantation have the right to organize and bargain collectively for their rights?
- 4) Does the plantation produce its flowers organically? If not, do workers have access to protective equipment?
- 5) Do workers get paid for overtime especially around peak seasons like Valentine's Day?

**Change the way you make your purchases to change the world for others!**

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<sup>6</sup> [www.laborrights.org](http://www.laborrights.org)