

Proposal for the MTSO Board of Trustees

The Fair Food Program, an initiative of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers based in Immokalee, Florida, is a unique partnership among farmers, farmworkers (most of whom immigrants from Central America), and retail food companies (including McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Chipotle, Whole Foods, Walmart, and Trader Joe's) that seeks to ensure livable wages and humane working conditions for agricultural workers who pick fruits and vegetables. Basically, the Fair Food Program requires corporate buyers of Florida tomatoes agree to pay one additional cent per pound to support a wage increase for farm workers, and to comply with a Code of Conduct that includes zero tolerance for forced labor and sexual assault of workers.

Wendy's is the third largest hamburger chain in the world, and the only one of the five largest fast food companies that is *not* participating in the Fair Food Program. In fact, Wendy's currently sources its tomatoes and other produce from a grower located outside the U.S. that was prosecuted for using forced labor—in other words, human trafficking—in 2013.

The purpose of the Wendy's Boycott that CIW is asking MTSO to endorse is to pressure Wendy's to protect the human rights of farmworkers by joining the Fair Food Program. Endorsing the boycott does not prohibit any one of you or anyone else affiliated with MTSO from eating Wendy's food, if you so choose—although I hope you would opt to take your business elsewhere. What endorsing the boycott does do is formally express that MTSO recognizes the moral claim that the farm workers who make Wendy's corporate profits possible have on the corporation regarding its responsibility to ensure fair wages and safe working conditions.

Why should MTSO endorse the Wendy's boycott?

1. Endorsing the boycott fits squarely with the commitments named in our institutional mission to justice, sustainability, and generativity. The value of sustainable justice that we proudly and prominently espouse is an intersectional conception of justice that includes within its purview immigrants, farm workers, and people who are vulnerable to sexual violence. Sustainable justice cannot be a value we claim only for ourselves and the school's property; rather, it is one that we must put in service to the common good, starting with the most vulnerable and exploitable. Supporting the basic rights and dignity of migrant farm workers is absolutely consistent with our institutional mission.
2. We are people of *public* faith. Religious commitments without public expression is mere sentimentalism. We do not pursue the transformed world we espouse by failing to take a stand to resist injustice when we are invited to do so.
3. The Wendy's corporation is located almost literally in our backyard, down Route 315 just fifteen miles in Dublin. This is not someone else's issue; it is *our* issue. We have the opportunity, and are being asked by the Coalition to Immokalee Workers, to give moral leadership by being the first seminary to join the long list of other religious groups and organizations that endorse the Wendy's boycott, including the United Church of Christ, the Unitarian Universalist Association, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Disciples of Christ, several Episcopal dioceses and the National Council of Churches. We are not being asked to stand alone and, indeed, we will be in *excellent* company.