

FOR A BETTER WORLD

ISSUES & CHALLENGES FOR A JUST ECONOMY

THIS IS A FREE PUBLICATION

ISSUE 13 | FALL 2016

Why Raising the Wage
is Good for Business

Weaving & Seed Saving:
One Woman's Story

Farmers on the
Fight for \$15

What's Fair? Employment
After Incarceration



REFERENCE GUIDE TO FAIR TRADE AND WORKER WELFARE PROGRAMS

KEY ELEMENTS OF CREDIBLE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

This guide differentiates program claims to help people match their purchasing practices to their values.

Fair Trade Membership	Fair Trade Certification	Factory & Farm Worker Welfare Certification
Organization evaluates fair trade commitment and practice of companies against its membership criteria. No systematic verification of conditions along the value chain.	3rd party certifiers field-inspect growing and processing, possibly trading operations and compare performance against a set of fair trade standards	
Fair Trade Membership and Certification Principles		Factory & Farm Worker Welfare Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale Producer Focus • Long-Term Direct Trading Relationships • Payment of Fair Prices • No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor • Workplace Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association <p><i>These are the principles of fair trade for traditional South to North trading. A similar set of principles have been adopted for North to North trading in the U.S. for farmers, and are considered solidarity programs.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of International Labor Organization (ILO) Core Conventions • Freedom of Association • Improving Wages • No Forced, Child or Otherwise Exploited Labor • Workplace Free of Discrimination, Abuse and Harassment • Safe and Healthy Workplace • Reasonable Working Hours • Clear and Adequate Grievance Mechanisms with No Retaliation • No Termination Without Just Cause <p>Though Fairtrade America, Fair for Life and Fair Trade USA may have different levels of credible factory & farmworker welfare programs they are misleadingly labeling products complying with their program as fair trade.</p>

Key: Credible program Not credible program **N/A** Not applicable - program is not attempting to do this

Organization	Membership	Certification (Third Party Inspection)	Fair Trade & Solidarity Program	Factory & Farm Worker Welfare Program	Domestic Program	Overall Analysis
	N/A					Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) is a solidarity program setting standards for Food Justice Certified, with strong requirements for buyer/farmer and farmer/worker relationships for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmers to negotiate a fair price with buyers and empowering farmworkers to negotiate fair wages and employment conditions.
		N/A				Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice. DFTA evaluates the labels of domestic eco-social certifiers; it has not developed any product labels of its own.
	N/A		N/A			The Fair Food Program (FFP) sets and oversees standards to improve conditions and pay for farmworkers. Starting with farmworkers on tomato fields in Florida, FFP has developed a successful monitoring and accountability program to address abuses and increase wages.
	N/A		N/A			The Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) sets and oversees standards for their Responsibly Grown. Farmworker Assured label for food safety and farmworker justice with farmworker involvement in monitoring and a focus on improved wages; the program does not include collective bargaining.
	N/A				N/A	Fairtrade America is the U.S. fair trade labeling member of Fairtrade International, a strong standard setter for organized small producers in the Global South. Its factory & farmworker welfare standards include collective bargaining and benchmarks for living wages, though would more accurately be termed Fair Labor.
	N/A				N/A	Fair for Life (FFL) is a fair trade labeling program developed by the Institute for Marketecology and now held by Eco-cert. FFL has strong eligibility requirements with a focus on marginalized producers and workers. Its farmworker welfare standards include living wage and democratically administered premiums, though would more accurately be termed Fair Labor.
		N/A		N/A	N/A	Fair Trade Federation (FTF) is a North America based fair trade membership organization exclusively for brands and retailers dedicated to fair trade for all products and practices; FTF allows their membership logo to appear on products signifying membership, though they do not audit supply chains.
	N/A					Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) is a standard setter that has attempted to expand the fair trade model into new areas (for example the United States) and sectors (for example seafood). Its hired labor standards include health and safety requirements and a democratically administered premium, but lack collective bargaining and living wage requirements. Its apparel standards do not include all steps of the supply chain and only one piece of the very complex supply chain could be certified, however the product still uses the certification logo. <small>For food ingredients. Not considered a credible certification for their apparel and home good standards.</small>
	N/A			N/A	N/A	FUNDEPPO is the standard setter for the only farmer-led fair trade certification, the Small Producer Symbol (SPP), which has strong requirements for eligibility and farmer empowerment. The program does not address farms with significant hired labor.
				N/A	N/A	World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is a global fair trade membership organization requiring strong internal control systems, peer review, and external audits to guarantee members comply with fair trade principles throughout all of their supply chains. Members may use the WFTO guarantee label.

Contributors



David Bronner is Cosmic Engagement Officer (CEO) of Dr. Bronner's, the top-selling brand of natural soaps in North America. He is a grandson of company founder, Emanuel Bronner, and a fifth-generation soap maker. Under the leadership of David and his brother Michael, Dr. Bronner's has been recognized as a sustainable leader in the natural products industry.



Terrell Hall is a formerly incarcerated citizen, who used his time in prison to better himself and make a difference in the lives of those around him. Released in September 2015, Terrell returned to New York City, where he works as an Outreach Manager for Fair Shake.



Meghan Hurley is the Communications Coordinator for CATA, where she manages their website, fundraising activities, legislative advocacy work, newsletters, donor relations, credit union initiative, and is in charge of running Radio CATA.



Ryan Johnson is the Executive Director of The Fairness Project, an organization bolstering state-based ballot initiatives and driving a national narrative to elevate issues of economic fairness.



Kerstin Lindgren is Fair World Project's Campaign Director. Prior to that she worked with a variety of food and agriculture businesses and NGOs, including the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA). She holds a master's degree in Agriculture, Food and Environment from Tufts University.



David Mohrmann taught for fifteen years at Humboldt State University, where he specialized in "Theater of the Oppressed." His recently released novel, XOCOMIL: The Winds of Atitlán, is informed by his many travels through Guatemala, beginning in the mid 1970's. The main character, Jaime, is based on Miguel (see David's story "Lucky" in this issue).



Yolanda Sebastiana Calgua Morales is a member of the Chuwila Cooperative, and an organizer, leader, and weaver in the community of Quijele, Chichicastenango.



Ryan Zinn is Political Director of Fair World Project, and Organic and Fair Trade Coordinator for Dr. Bronner's. Ryan has been involved in the food justice movement at home and abroad for twenty years, including work with such organizations as the Center for International Environmental Law, Friends of the Earth-Paraguay, Global Exchange, and the Organic Consumers Association (OCA).

Articles written are the view points from the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by Fair World Project. We encourage you to use your own judgment, ask questions, and visit our website for more information.

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IN MEMORY of



Michael D. Aubert

Founder & Creative Director of

Cosmic Egg Studios

September 23, 1975 – July 7, 2016



One of our contributors, and the primary designer of our publication for the first twelve issues, Michael D. Aubert passed away suddenly last July. He was the loving husband to Cindy Aubert and the father to Isabella Aubert, or, as he affectionately called her, Bella. He was also the son of Kathy and Roger Aubert and the brother of Jackie Rollins.

In his early years, Michael attended Mass Art, and then he went to Northeastern University, where he pursued his many passions, including art, technology, science and astronomy. Above all else, though, Northeastern is where he acquired his true calling to become an entrepreneur. After starting off with a small clothing company called Baked Goods, which was a one-of-a-kind apparel company, he eventually founded Cosmic Egg Studios in 1997, a Web Development and Graphic Design business which he led successfully as Creative Director until his recent passing.

Michael's "job" never felt like work because it was his true passion. Indeed, he lived by the motto: "If you do what you love, you will never work a day in your life." And as his clients and colleagues would attest, this attitude shined through in everything he did - Michael was larger than life. Although many clients only had a relationship with him over the phone, they always felt like they knew him as a good friend.

Michael was a noble, sincere, respectful, energetic and genuinely good-hearted person. Everyone who met him loved him. He had a contagious smile and a beautiful soul that he shared with everyone he met. He was one-of-a-kind, and we will never forget him. Nobody will ever fill the void that he has left in our lives, for he has made a strong imprint on all of our hearts. We have all been blessed to know and work with him.



Is it possible to have a just economy without dignified jobs that pay fairly? We don't think so, and that's why this issue of *For A Better World* focuses on how we value work in a complex and changing economy from a range of perspectives.

The movement to raise the minimum wage in the United States continues to grow. Ryan Johnson of the Fairness Project tells how, in the absence of federal action, states and municipalities around the country are raising wages for their residents.

David Bronner offers his perspective as Cosmic Engagement Officer (CEO) of Dr.

Bronner's, a leader in the natural products industry for their soaps and sustainable business practices. As a company that's long been committed to paying employees a living wage and generous benefits, Dr. Bronner's is now working with mission-aligned natural product brands and retailers on a "Fair Pay Today" campaign. The goal: to bring together a coalition in favor of giving workers across the U.S. a raise.

In the Policy Corner, our Campaign Director, Kerstin Lindgren, takes an in-depth look at one of our country's primary agricultural regions, California, to hear what farmers have to say about their new minimum wage. How will farmers paying an hourly wage of \$15 to their workers compete in the marketplace? We have a few ideas, and they are not all doom and gloom!

We also shine a light on two factions of our workforce that we rarely hear about: guest workers and people reentering the workforce after incarceration. Two men, Terrell and Miguel, tell their stories of systemic challenges and the struggle to get by.

In this issue we also pay tribute to Berta Cáceres, an Indigenous Rights leader and environmental activist who was assassinated in Honduras last spring. We remember her life's work—and the work of so many others who have put their lives on the line to protect their lands and communities from corporate and government threats.

Lastly, I was lucky enough to travel to Guatemala and sit down with members of a weaving co-operative there. My conversation with their leader touched on so many of the issues we work on, from cooperatives to seed sovereignty to climate change to fighting for our communities—and balancing it all with our daily lives.

Onwards to a just economy,

Dana Geffner

Executive Director

Distribute Fair World Project's *For A Better World*

For a Better World is a free semi-annual publication that features articles from a variety of perspectives, including farmers, farmworkers, consumers and committed fair trade brands. FWP helps consumers decipher fair trade certification schemes and is an excellent educational resource. Distribute *For a Better World* for free at your business or organization. **Order now by visiting our website: www.fairworldproject.org**

Let Us Know What You Think: Send a Letter to the Editor

Email comments to editor@fairworldproject.org or send us a letter. Please include your full name, daytime phone number and email. The editorial team may shorten and edit correspondence for clarity.

Learn More - For more information on Fair World Project please visit: www.fairworldproject.org

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Cover Photo
Fight for 15 Chicago
#FightFor15 is a national movement to raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour.

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Mission:

Fair World Project (FWP) seeks to protect the use of the term "fair trade" in the marketplace, expand markets for authentic fair trade, educate consumers about key issues in trade and agriculture, advocate for policies leading to a just economy, and facilitate collaborative relationships to create true system change.

Why FWP Exists:

- Conscious consumers, armed with informed purchasing power, can create positive change and promote economic justice.
- Family-scale farmers and workers in both the Global South and Global North often face volatile prices, low wages and poor working conditions as a result of unfair trade policies and corporate practices. FWP promotes policy changes and market-based initiatives that address these systemic problems.
- Existing certifiers and membership organizations vary in their criteria and philosophy for qualification of products and brands certified to display eco-social labels or claims, such as fair trade. FWP educates organizations, retailers and consumers on the standards reflected in various certification schemes, and works to keep eco-social terms meaningful.

Goals:

- To contribute to the movement to build a just economy that benefits and empowers all people especially those traditionally marginalized in our current system, including family-scale farmers, small-scale artisans, and food and apparel workers,
- To educate consumers, retailers, manufacturers and marketers regarding:
 - The standards, criteria, and possible fair-washing behind claims of fairness and justice on products they produce, sell and/or consume, including understanding the benefits and limitations of third-party verifications,
 - The ways government and international trade policies support or inhibit a just economy,
 - Key issues, theories, initiatives, policies, and campaigns related to fair trade, family-scale farmers globally, labor justice, sweat-free apparel, and trade and agriculture policy.
- To pressure companies to: improve sourcing and labor practices by obtaining fair trade, fair labor or other appropriate certification for major supply chains; make only authentic eco-social market claims; and support public policies that benefit small-scale producers and workers,
- To promote certification labels, membership organizations, companies, and brands that further progress toward a just economy,
- To facilitate dialogue among and between movements working towards a just economy,
- To advocate for a better world by: educating and inspiring individuals and organizations through our twice-yearly free publication; providing educational resources and workshops for consumers, retailers, and brands; and collaborating with other organizations with similar values.

A Tale of Two Chickens



In just four minutes, the Sustainable Food Trust has summed up the true cost of industrial agriculture and a path toward a better future. Their new video, "A Tale of Two Chickens," follows the path of two birds, one pasture-raised and one factory-farmed, while exploring the hidden costs of the pesticide-laden, heavily subsidized food system that makes cheap chicken possible. The video is the first in a series that aims to examine the true cost of common grocery items, from corn to pork.

Watch the video: <http://sustainablefoodtrust.org/articles/a-tale-of-two-chickens/>

New Overtime Rule Benefits 4+ Million Workers

The fight for fair wages continues to gain traction. This May, President Obama signed an update to the Department of Labor (DOL) rules, outlining eligibility for overtime pay. Low-wage workers with managerial tasks, as well as white-collar workers doing sales and administrative work, have long been classified as salaried or "exempt" from time-and-a-half pay. This rule states that any worker paid less than \$47,476/year for full-time work is now eligible for overtime, more than doubling the previous wage threshold of \$23,660/year. The new rule takes effect in December of 2016, and that threshold is set to automatically increase every three years thereafter. The DOL estimates that this change will impact approximately 4.5 million workers.

Questions Raised About New Fair Trade Apparel Standards



Controversy continues over the attempt to label apparel as "fair trade." The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), a leader in the movement to improve working conditions in the global garment industry, has

criticized the new Fairtrade Textile Standard issued by Fairtrade International (FLO), the standard-setting body for the majority of fair trade certifications. Concerns range from specific aspects of the standard, including the long implementation time before requirements such as a living wage must be met, to the overarching concern of whether even the best certification program can ever be the right approach for apparel's highly complex factory supply chains. Additionally, CCC explains, the standard places most of the burden of implementation on suppliers, and does not require brands to commit to real change in their purchasing and operating practices.

Activists have had similar criticisms of Fair Trade USA's apparel standards in the years since they were launched, and have pointed out that Fair Trade USA's apparel program does not require a living wage to be phased in, does not require a democratically organized workplace, and does not even cover the full supply chain for certified products.

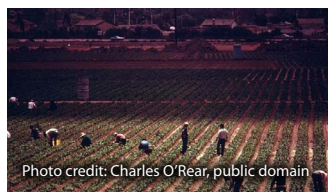
For more: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/press-releases/2016/03/22/new-fairtrade-standard-will-not-benefit-garment-workers>

Small-Scale Farmers Really Can Feed the World!

How can we feed the world's people and halt the destructive progress of climate change? A new paper from the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) offers the case for not just tweaking our current food system, but initiating a complete paradigm shift: "It is not a lack of evidence holding back the agro-ecological alternative. It is the mismatch between its huge potential to improve outcomes across food systems, and its much smaller potential to generate profits for agribusiness firms."

Full report: http://www.ipes-food.org/images/Reports/UniformityToDiversity_FullReport.pdf

"We Just Have to Continue Working." A New Report on Farmworkers & Heat-Related Illness



Farmworkers die from heat-related illness at 20 times the rate of the rest of the U.S. workforce. That rate has increased over the past decade, and will likely continue to go up as global climate change makes California's Central

Valley even warmer. A new report from the California Institute for Rural Studies looks at why heat-related illnesses continue despite educational and regulatory efforts. Through focus group interviews with farmworkers, they reveal a complex yet commonsense set of causes. One of the biggest systemic issues is the piecework system of pay: When workers are paid based on pieces picked versus hours worked, stopping for shade or to drink water is less likely. Interviews also suggest that the content and presentation of trainings, as well as the quality and temperature of water available, makes a difference in workers' hydration patterns.

For the full text of the report: <http://cirsinc.org/phocadownload/userupload/jafscd-farmworker-self-care-march-2016%202.pdf>

Greening the Revolution



A new documentary on food justice features interviews with small-scale farmers, revolutionaries, political intellectuals such as Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and Vandana Shiva, as well as government and corporate

officials, including the director of the FDA and a Monsanto executive (yes, an interview with Monsanto!). Focusing on issues such as globalization, GMOs, farmer suicides, diabetes, migrant farmworkers, and hunger, the film also looks at resistance to harmful economic policies, amazing sustainable alternatives, and organic agriculture practiced by brilliant small-scale farmers.

Watch it for free on YouTube, or at www.greeningtherevolution.org.

Sign up for FWP's eNewsletter at: fairworldproject.org

It's Time for Wages With Dignity | *by Ryan Johnson*

Quietly, hidden behind the headlines that feature presidential candidates bemoaning the state of our country and our economy, voters in several states are no longer waiting on politicians. They're taking matters into their own hands and launching minimum wage ballot initiatives to create the economic change people sorely need. The impetus for these campaigns is simple and stark: Economic inequality is one of the top issues of our time.

While fully correcting our economic ills that have steadily gotten worse over the last three decades won't happen overnight, the most immediate and available step forward is raising the minimum wage. Bolstered by the power of ballot initiatives and encouraged by millions of grassroots supporters who have made their voice heard through years of protest, these campaigns are turning talk into action, and seem destined to deliver raises to millions of hardworking Americans this November.

The Problem

Since the early 1990s, stagnant income has left behind millions of working families in an economy that is fundamentally stacked against them. In the richest country in the world, in the 21st century, millions of Americans go to work every day and yet still live in poverty. We are living within a broken system that needs to be fixed.

As it stands, we currently use government programs like food stamps, the earned income tax credit, and Medicaid to subsidize employers who systematically and purposely pay low wages. Recently dubbed the "parasite economy," it's a dynamic in which businesses cling to broken and damaging low-wage models that send workers home with a paycheck that simply can't cover the bills, and leave the rest of us to pick up the tab. This approach is destroying the American dream. What are we saying about the value and dignity of work when a full time job can't even come close to supporting a family? What message are we sending about personal responsibility when we accept that working hard is no longer enough to meet basic needs?

We know from polling and conversations that a significant majority of business owners recognize we have a problem with inequality in America and agree that we should raise the wage. But there is a significant difference between acknowledging a problem and acting.

Too many employers still behave as if improving the wellbeing of workers and families is someone else's job. But that mindset is a mistake. Business owners decide every day how to run their businesses, and they can just as easily decide to make real change by investing in their workforce as they can shy away from paying and treating their employees fairly. Just as businesses and customers of organic product companies have led the change by embracing fair trade, organics, and sustainability,

businesses now have the opportunity to support fair pay for all workers here at home.

The millions of working families who depend on minimum wage jobs don't have any time to wait. The good news is, we know how to fix this problem. In a consumer-driven world, raising the minimum wage ensures that we can lift the incomes of working people, which is good for working families, businesses and our economy. By putting money in the pockets of millions of consumers, raising the minimum wage creates a positive cycle, feeding our economy while sustaining our working families.

The momentum for raising the minimum wage is palpable across the country. Hardly a week goes by without workers taking to the streets, in protests demanding that their hard work be fairly compensated. What started as a small movement in coastal cities like Seattle and San Francisco is beginning to spread throughout the country.

Sadly, our federal minimum wage continues to stagnate at \$7.25/hour (just \$15,080/year) and has far less buying power than it had in the 1960s. Despite the best efforts of advocates and allies, the outlook for federal progress on the issue is dim.

The wide dissatisfaction with political leadership that we see in every state, city, and town in America is based on a common and well-founded belief that elected leaders will not enact the changes needed to reduce economic inequality and help working people make progress toward achieving the American dream. However, in many parts of the country there is a solution – direct democracy – and more and more voters are seizing the opportunity to do on their own what politicians cannot or will not.



The Path Forward

Our organization, The Fairness Project, encourages and backs state- and city-based ballot initiative campaigns and raises national awareness of the need to bring economic fairness to tens of millions of people. The Fairness Project helps put political power directly into the hands of voters to enact the economic improvements they want and need, and no issue is riper for this type of direct action than raising the minimum wage.

In 2014, four initiatives to raise the minimum wage were successful, even though they were in conservative states – Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota. More recently, ballot initiatives catalyzed action at the state level. In California, the Governor and Legislature enacted a \$15 minimum wage law just one week after a popular \$15 minimum wage initiative qualified for the ballot. Oregon's legislature also passed a significant minimum wage increase in response to a ballot initiative and after deliberation with business owners, advocates, and workers. And, in Washington, D.C., a \$15 minimum wage looks almost certain after Mayor Muriel Bowser switched her position and announced her support in response to a ballot measure that was sure to qualify for November.

Voters in four other states are putting minimum wage on the ballot this year – Arizona, Colorado, Maine, and Washington – states that span the political spectrum and offer millions of Americans a raise in November. In Maine, the campaign Mainers for Fair Wages has qualified the measure for the ballot and voters will have the opportunity to vote on a \$12 an hour minimum wage to be gradually phased in by 2020. Following in the footsteps of states like California, the policy will also eliminate the tipped penalty, meaning all workers, including those who earn tips, will be paid one fair wage. In Colorado, Colorado Families for a Fair Wage is pushing to place on the ballot a \$12 an hour minimum wage to be gradually phased in by 2020. Raise Up Washington and Arizonans for Fair Wages and Healthy Families are also including earned sick time in their policy proposals, which aim for a \$13.50 an hour minimum wage by 2020 (Washington) and a \$12 an hour minimum wage by 2020 (Arizona). All of these campaigns enjoy significant support from voters and

are presenting policy choices that are reasonable, transparent and fair.

Coalition partners in these states have worked diligently with economists, policy experts, local businesses and workers to think through why their communities will benefit from a raise to the levels they propose. The result is reasonable policy that will raise the floor in these states and spur economic growth for local businesses.

Furthermore, in each area the wage is phased in over a number of years, making the increases predictable and transparent. These campaigns are not proposing radical shifts overnight that will disrupt markets, but rather, long-term horizons that ensure businesses and communities can adapt and thrive.



Finally, these campaigns aim to reach a minimum wage that gives all individuals who put in an honest day's work a shot at escaping poverty. These aren't hand-outs; they are efforts to restore the value of work, a cornerstone of the American promise.

The challenges that face working families are not insurmountable. In fact, we know how to fix them. Simple and reasonable steps like raising the minimum wage, providing earned sick days, and easing the burden of student debt would provide immediate benefit to millions of low-wage workers and middle class families. If our elected officials refuse to act, then

voters across the country are clearly saying they will find another way to move forward. The campaigns in Washington, Colorado, Arizona, and Maine have the opportunity to not only deliver much-needed raises to working families, but also to pave a road forward in which the people take collective action to restore balance and shared prosperity in our economy.

To get involved and learn more, visit: thefairnessproject.org, facebook.com/projectfairness, or follow us on twitter @projectfairness.

All graphics credit: The Fairness Project

THE BUSINESS CASE

- FOR RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE -

by David Bronner

At Dr. Bronner's, the company I run with my family, we believe that we can only prosper in the long run if we contribute to the prosperity of society as a whole. It's why we strive to compensate all our staff fairly, cap executive compensation at five times the lowest paid position, and dedicate profits to support and advance progressive causes.

This is also why we've joined the growing movement to raise the minimum wage. Dr. Bronner's is on the Steering Committee of the DC for \$15 campaign this cycle, and has pledged \$500,000 to minimum wage battles around the country. We are excited to closely partner with The Fairness Project, which is bolstering state-based minimum wage ballot campaigns and driving a national narrative to elevate issues of economic fairness, as well as with Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, which has called for a federal increase in the minimum wage to at least \$12 by 2020.

Together, we are coordinating with mission-aligned brands and retailers on a "Fair Pay Today" campaign this fall to raise awareness through special labeling, events and in-store messaging. We encourage all businesses to engage and be the "unusual allies" advocating an incremental and reasonable wage increase for hard-working Americans everywhere.

As my brother Mike Bronner, President of Dr. Bronner's, says: "Investing in our workforce by ensuring every employee is paid a fair living wage has had a major positive impact on our company. Morale is high, turnover is low, and every employee gives a hundred and ten percent. Everyone who is working full time should receive a living wage, and be able to independently afford a basic standard for quality of life without relying on sub-par government support or second or third jobs."

Nothing drives job creation more than consumer demand, and nothing drives consumer demand more than higher wages. But

business interests opposed to a higher minimum wage often raise unfounded concerns in their attempts to influence citizens to vote against their own interests and against basic fairness. Common business concerns are addressed point by point here:

Won't raising the minimum wage increase the cost of doing business?*

Businesses affected by minimum wage increases will see cost savings from lower employee turnover and benefit from increased productivity, morale, product quality and customer satisfaction as well as increased consumer purchasing power. This will substantially or completely offset the increase in payroll. In addition, minimum wage increases don't happen overnight: increases are generally phased in gradually over a number of years on a set schedule, giving businesses both large and small time to adjust and keep their profit margins.

The fact is, volatile energy and food prices have much more routine cost impact on businesses and consumers than minimum wage increases. Consumers may pay a marginal amount more for certain goods and services, but the benefits of a fair wage floor far outweigh any needed pricing adjustments.

Won't raising the minimum wage impact small businesses more than it will large businesses?*

No: it's large chains that are more likely to pay employees bottom of the barrel wages. Raising the minimum wage will help level the playing field for smaller, independent businesses that invest in their workers and are more rooted in their local communities.

Won't raising the minimum wage destroy jobs?*

Rigorous studies of actual minimum wage increases have shown that raising the minimum wage does not cause job loss (e.g., Institute for Research on Labor and Employment). Large meta studies (studies of studies) have found "little or no discernible effect on employment" (Source: Center for Economic and Policy Research). In the group of states that have raised their minimum wage in recent years, job growth has been higher than in states where the minimum wage did not go up (Source: CEPR and Integrity Florida).

What type of workers are most affected? Doesn't this just help teenagers?*

Most low-wage workers are adults. 89% of the workers who would be affected by raising the federal minimum wage to \$12, for example, are at least 20 years old (Source: Economic Policy Institute).

But younger workers also deserve a higher minimum wage. Many workers younger than 20 are working to pay for necessities, afford higher education or are contributing to their family income. Everyone deserves a living wage.

What is the case for raising the minimum wage from the conservative standpoint?

Raising the minimum wage is about reducing inequality, but it is also about restoring the true value of work. Every American's hard work should be rewarded. At Dr. Bronner's, this has been one of the ideas at the heart of paying all our workers a fair wage.

To conclude, raising the minimum wage is good for business and good for us all. Paying workers fairly isn't just the right thing to do, it's what makes our communities and businesses thrive: happy employees mean lower turnover and higher productivity. Workers who make more spend more, putting money back into the economy, rather than being forced to rely on public assistance programs.

It's past time to pay a fair share to the workers who make our collective wealth possible. We encourage all citizens and businesses to vote for a higher minimum wage at the ballot box this November. For more information, and to see how you can join the movement, visit: FairPayToday.org. Let's raise the minimum wage now!

*Source: *Business for a Fair Minimum Wage*



Photo credit: Dr. Bronner's

READERS Speak

In our Spring 2016 issue, we asked you to weigh in on the question:

"What do you think the federal minimum wage should be and why?"

We received many passionate comments.

Here are just a few of them:

"Of course it should be phased in gradually, but a firm target of \$15 within a couple of years is a lot more reasonable than inching it up to \$12 and then having to start the fight to raise it all over again."

Bonnie Jean, via Facebook

"Instead of a minimum wage, we need a proportional wage. The lowest paid employee must make at least, say, 5-10% of the highest paid (such as the CEO). This would help small businesses who are starting out, if they can get employees to work for small amount with the promise of making more as the business grows—and the big corporations would have to pay their employees well!"

Debrah, via Facebook

"My husband and I own a small business on Long Island, NY. If we had to pay each of our workers a minimum wage of \$15.00, we would have to close our store. That's about the amount we make as owners of the business. I think a more realistic amount for a minimum hourly wage is between \$10 and \$12."

Claudia, via email

"I'm no expert, but I always thought they should go whole hog and demand \$25/hour, with no incremental implementation."

Mike, via Twitter

"The minimum wage should depend on where you live. Here in the Bay Area, I would say it should be \$30 an hour. In the middle of the country, I've heard it is much, much cheaper to live. So it needs to be regionally sensitive."

Laura, via email



“Berta Did Not Die. She Multiplied.”

by Ryan Zinn

A Tribute to the Work of Berta Cáceres, Indigenous Rights Leader

Berta Cáceres was murdered in her home on March 3, 2016 in the community of La Esperanza, Honduras. Berta cofounded the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) in 1993, a grassroots organization that struggled for indigenous rights and the environment. Berta had dedicated her life to human rights and environmental justice, and was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in 2015 for her work.

I first met Berta Cáceres in the early 2000s while working in Chiapas, Mexico. I was fortunate to work with many organizations in the region, including COPINH. After decades of military dictatorships, the lost decade of the 1980s and six years into the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, frontline communities and activists were deepening their analysis and strategy. Emerging at the time was a growing recognition of the shared experiences and challenges in Southern Mexico and Central America: extractive industries like mining, damming of rivers, privatization of natural resources, biopiracy, and land grabbing. Rural communities were especially vulnerable after enduring the onset of so-called free trade agreements including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Spearheaded by Gustavo Castro and others, local organizations embarked on a new era of cross-border alliances and joint campaigns, linking frontline organizations and struggles throughout Mesoamerica.

Gustavo Castro, director for Friends of the Earth Mexico-Otros Mundos Chiapas, was with Berta the night of her assassination in Honduras. He was injured in the attack and the lone witness to Berta's murder. The Honduran government prevented Gustavo from leaving for close to a month, while his lawyer was illegally suspended and under constant threat. Gustavo was finally permitted to return home on March 30th, but only after massive

pressure on the Honduran government by international human rights organizations.

Latin America has a long history of human rights violations and ecological destruction, often masked as development. For years, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank have funded mega projects like dams as a means of bolstering unaccountable governments and saddling countries with huge external debts. From the 369 Mayans killed in 1983 by the Guatemalan Army for opposing the Chixoy Dam on the Rio Negro, to the \$15 billion Yacyretá Dam boondoggle, dubbed “a monument to corruption” by former Argentinian President Carlos Menem, which has displaced thousands of Argentinians and will displace thousands more if ever completed. Displacement often comes without proper consultation and compensation, while having disastrous environmental impacts. The sad irony is that most displaced and impacted communities rarely access the electricity or irrigation created by the dams. These mega projects simply reinforce the inequity and injustice in these communities.

Local organizations and activists have not stood idly by in the face of ever-expanding threats to their livelihoods and communities by extractive industries and corporate agriculture. These organizations have a rich history of not only opposing destructive and unaccountable intrusions, but also developing people-centered alternatives. This opposition, however, has led to massive persecution. Latin America, has a long legacy –

stretching back to before the dark years of military dictatorships – of persecuting human rights defenders, community organizers, and peasants. Honduras is known for being one of the world’s most dangerous countries, and ranks high in murders of environmentalists with (according to Global Witness) 109 killed between 2010 and 2015. This phenomenon is not limited to Honduras, however; it is a global crisis. According to Autonomous University of Barcelona’s Institute for Science, Technology and the Environment’s “Global Atlas of Environmental Justice,” there were more than 1,750 environmental conflicts globally last year alone.

At the heart of Berta and COPINH’s struggle was Agua Zarca Dam, a series of dams on the Gualcarque River managed by the Honduran corporation, Desarrollos Energéticos S.A., or DESA. The Gualcarque River is life-blood of Honduras’ Indigenous Lenca people and damming it would cut off their water and destroy their livelihoods.

Early on, Berta and COPINH filed federal complaints against the project, bringing their case to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, as well as the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation (IFC), which was funding the project. Despite massive opposition from the Lenca, Honduran environmentalists, and the international community, the Honduran government and DESA pushed the project forward. With no recourse left, COPINH organized a blockade to stop the dam’s construction, an effort that was immediately met with violent reprisals from DESA, private paramilitaries, and the Honduran Army. Community leaders were murdered, COPINH members were beaten, and Berta began receiving more death threats, all with impunity and government complicity. Still, COPINH’s efforts have achieved some success, with Agua Zarca’s future in jeopardy as the IFC and Chinese investor, Sinohydro, have pulled out of the project.

Berta’s struggle is set against the backdrop of accelerating efforts to exploit global strategic resources and U.S. foreign policy. In 2009, left-leaning President Manuel Zelaya was removed from power in a coup d’etat supported by the United States. Zelaya represented the

"You cannot delink the fight of indigenous people for their lands, territories and resources from the violence that's committed against indigenous women (and men), especially if this is a violence that is perpetrated by state authorities or by corporate security."



Photo credit: Goldman Environmental Prize

latest trend in Latin America toward more populist governments seeking to develop a path independent of U.S. intervention. Under Zelaya’s replacement, Porfirio Lobo, community-displacing mega projects like Agua Zarca accelerated, as did the persecution.

The United States has a long and disgraceful legacy of intervening in Latin American politics, from the early years of gunboat diplomacy and Operation Condor, to economic intervention in the 2000s to counter the “Pink Tide.” In the aftermath of the coup, then Secretary Hillary Clinton pressured allies in the region to deter Zelaya’s return to the presidency, claiming in her memoir, “We strategized on a plan to restore order in Honduras and

ensure that free and fair elections could be held quickly and legitimately, which would render the question of Zelaya moot.” “Restoring order” via elections translates into backing presidential and congressional candidates sympathetic to the United States.

Honduras reflects the extraordinary challenges facing frontline communities, and especially indigenous people, around the globe. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, remarked, “You cannot delink the fight of indigenous people for their lands, territories and resources from the violence that’s committed against indigenous women (and men), especially if this is a violence that is perpetrated by state authorities or by corporate security.”

To date, little progress has been made to hold Berta’s murderers accountable. Four individuals have been arrested in connection with her murder, but the Honduran government has refused to accept the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ involvement in the case, and popular sentiment is that these individuals will take the fall for the establishment.

In the months after Berta’s death, the struggle of frontline communities facing mega extractive industries, and the persecution of environmental rights defenders, have made global headlines. Despite increased oppression, activists in Honduras and abroad have dug in, continuing to campaign for democratic and people-centered development.

Berta was fond of saying “They are afraid of us because we are not afraid of them.” She leaves behind a legacy, organization, and family defined by absolute commitment to defending human rights.

May we have the courage to follow her lead.



LUCKY

A GUEST WORKER'S STORY

by David Mohrmann

Photos credit: Lee Torrence

Though he had not wanted to leave his wife and children for six months, had not wanted to sleep on a cot in a room with three other men, had not wanted to work long days under difficult conditions, Miguel said he was one of the lucky ones. At least he had a good job waiting in Guatemala when he came back.

Knowing that was true, I asked Miguel why he'd gone.

"Because," he told me, "here my salary is 2000 quetzales a month (about \$270). In the United States I can make three times that much."

Miguel first went to Maine in 2009. There were eight indigenous men chosen from the Lake Atitlán area. One determining factor was that all of them could afford to make the four-hour trip to Guatemala City and pay the required \$200 to arrange for an H-2 visa. The H-2 Visa is designed for short-term "unskilled" workers. It so happens that Miguel is quite a skilled gardener, but for his job in Maine he would need no expertise.

There is a great deal of controversy surrounding the H-2 program. Aside from the general complaint that it suppresses opportunities and wages for willing U.S. workers, human rights activists have documented numerous cases of abuse. Federal regulations do provide some protection, but only on paper. Actual enforcement is notoriously weak. The fact is, foreign workers are at the mercy of their employers.

Still, the foreign workers go. In droves. In 2015 there were approximately 140,000 H-2 visas issued to U.S. companies. Miguel went again. Yes, he missed his family, but did what was necessary to improve their lives. He went with the same company, whose name he did not remember. At

least that was what he said, perhaps choosing not to incriminate himself should he someday want to be re-hired.

The company bought Miguel's round-trip plane ticket. That cost would be subtracted from his paycheck. Upon arrival, he was taken in a van to the grocery store nearest his housing unit. He was given \$100 for food and supplies, a sum also taken from his salary.

Work began at dawn the following day. He was paid twelve dollars an hour, and was promised a forty-hour week. From each of his monthly checks there were other routine deductions: the cost of his apartment (he and seven others sharing two small bedrooms, a small living room, a small kitchen), plus whatever electricity and water they consumed. About half of his earnings paid his share of the bills. He told me that the company owned the apartments, which meant that they controlled the costs. "I met illegals," he said, "with places of their own. Nicer places than ours for cheaper rent."

He and his housemates worked at hotels, office complexes, and private mansions. They pruned trees, mowed lawns, whipped weeds, and maintained flowerbeds. Miguel did not mind the work. In fact, he wanted more of it. His main complaint was that he never got the promised forty hours.

The thirty or so hours he was given each week were not enough to justify his coming.

"Bad organization," was the way he explained it. "Too many bosses."

"What do you mean?"

"Every morning we went off with a different boss. He gave orders and we did what he said. Then he drove off in his truck. Later, a different boss might come and tell us to stop. Sometimes we were

taken back to the office to wait for other orders. Sometimes we did nothing for half the day."

"You didn't get paid for waiting?"

"No."

"You couldn't complain?"

"They didn't speak Spanish. The only one was the main boss, the man who hired me. He helped when he could, but most of the time he was gone."

Miguel kicked at the dirt and said that none of his bosses (including "the main one") understood how much he'd counted on a full week of work. "They didn't care," he grumbled. "They did what was best for themselves."

"Did you feel cheated?"


"Not really cheated, just ignored. There wasn't any respect for us."

"Overall," I said, "it sounds like a bad experience."

"Yes, I...I was sad a lot."

Though Miguel is normally a very happy guy, full of smiles and jokes, his remembered sadness was now visible. I saw that he wanted to forget what had happened and return to his Guatemalan life. Still, it seemed that one more question was necessary.

"In the future, if they ask again, will you go?"

"Probably," he said. He looked embarrassed to admit it. "They do want me back, and will save a place, but not for long. If I go within three years I won't have to pay the visa fee. I am lucky to be on their list. Not many of us get this chance." 

Fair Chance Employment Benefits Us All | by Terrell Hall

Earning a living wage through gainful employment is crucial to the huge number of Americans struggling to make ends meet, including the 630,000 women and men who will come home from prison this year. A staggering amount of employment challenges await the formerly incarcerated because of their felony convictions. Particularly hard hit are black men, who are more than six times as likely as white men to be incarcerated. And, according to a Princeton study conducted in Milwaukee and New York City, employers are far more likely to offer entry-level jobs to white men with a record over black men who have never been arrested.

Many formerly incarcerated people have no public sector work experience or references, and often lack the computer skills to find jobs that fit their abilities and personalities. Psychological impediments often accompany the stigma of incarceration, along with difficulties in securing housing, clothing, transportation, and childcare. Between 2005 and 2010, 76.6% of our formerly incarcerated citizens were rearrested, many after failing to secure a living-wage job.

While serving my sentence inside the Ray Brook federal prison in upstate New York, I wanted to help address these issues as well as dynamics in the inner city that led me and others to make anti-social choices in the first place. I worked on reentry for more than 10 years and co-founded a Reentry Council. When I learned about Fair Shake, an organization dedicated to supporting the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated people into society, I was so impressed with their Reentry Packet that I created workshops to engage others in conversation and equip them with tools to better navigate their reentry process. Founder Sue Kastensen brings an “all hands on deck, no excuses” approach to reentry that offers tools, training, and information to prisoners and other stakeholders, including employers and families.

President Obama’s administration has also recently prioritized fairness in the hiring of the formerly incarcerated, encouraging employers to “Take the Fair Chance Business Pledge”: “At its heart, America is a nation of second chances. That’s why the White House is calling on businesses to invest in their communities and eliminate unnecessary hiring barriers for individuals with criminal records.”

Fair-chance employment supports fair opportunities for those who have made mistakes. Employers can support reentry success by removing the box that asks, “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” from their job applications. This allows applicants to be considered on equal footing before a background check is conducted, and offers an opportunity to discuss their history



Marty and Terrell in the office
Photo credit: Fair Shake



Sue and Terrell working out of the Fair Shake office, Brooklyn NY
Photo credit: Fair Shake

on their own terms. The Ban the Box initiative does not prevent an employer from conducting a background check; instead it is done either after the interview or when a job offer is presented. To encourage employers to hire the formerly incarcerated, financial incentives are available through the Fidelity Bonding Program, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and On-The-Job Training programs.

Concerns about hiring the formerly incarcerated shouldn’t prevent an individual’s chance at redemption; but of course employers should be as cautious as they would be when vetting any applicant. To better understand and dispel myths of hiring the formerly incarcerated, employers can visit fairshake.net.

In the fall of 2015, Ray Brook’s Warden collaborated with the Reentry Council and Fair Shake to create a Reentry Summit, scheduled to be held one day after my release. I had invested so much in reentry for so long that I stayed the extra day to participate. There I met David Bronner, CEO of Dr. Bronner’s Magic Soaps, and Marty Sokoloff, owner of Good Groceries. I shared my idea of a “Redefining Cool” program aimed at at-risk youth. The program would enlist formerly incarcerated individuals to counter anti-social messages and models in inner cities with pro-social constructive ones, delivered with style from the perspective of experience.

Sue, David, and Marty collaborated to hire me on at Fair Shake to build out and launch the “Redefining Cool” program. These three change agents saw possibility in me. They decided to address the challenging issues and make informed decisions rather than simply shaking my hand and wishing me good luck. We are all invested in building reentry success.

Each of us can do something today. Can you help to Ban the Box? Will you encourage your employer to include the formerly incarcerated in anti-discrimination policies? It’s time for each of us to see the role we play in fixing our broken system. It’s not only the formerly incarcerated individual whose life is at stake here; the outcome will affect us all. Everyone deserves a fair chance. 🇺🇸

To find out how you can engage, visit:
fairshake.net/getinvolvednow.

To take the fair-chance pledge, visit:
whitehouse.gov/issues/criminal-justice/business-pledge.

Farms in California Prepare for \$15/Hour Minimum Wage

by Kerstin Lindgren

California legislators, responding to the growing Fight for \$15 and Raise the Wage movements, passed a law earlier this year that will guarantee all workers in the state a minimum wage of \$15 an hour. This is great news for farmworkers in the country's largest agricultural state. But will it be a disaster for farmers and the agricultural economy?

Not necessarily. Phil Foster, an organic farmer in California who produces more than 60 crops for sale at regional farmers markets and retail locations, already pays his approximately 50 year-round workers at least \$15 an hour, plus bonuses. By the time the rest of the state is required to pay this rate, he expects to be paying workers a few dollars an hour more. For Foster, this is not only the right thing to do, it also makes business sense by helping him retain the best employees and avoid the added costs of training a new crew each season.

Foster is the first to admit, however, that just because he's made it work on his farm doesn't mean all farmers will be able to follow suit. Dave Runsten, an agricultural economist with Community Alliance with Family Farmers, explains that agriculture is highly competitive and most farmers have no control over the price they receive. Small-scale farmers, organic farmers, and others

who aren't trying to compete solely on price and efficiency in commodity markets need to find a way to differentiate themselves in the marketplace or find an alternative business model. Foster, as a diversified organic farmer handling sales directly, has both a differentiated product and an alternative business model.

California passed the new minimum wage bill and considered a second piece of legislation intended to give farmworkers a better wage. Currently farmworkers are exempt from regulations that require other hourly workers to be paid overtime after 40 hours of work in a week or eight hours a day, but the proposed California bill would have changed that. Although the bill was defeated this year, its sponsor vowed to introduce it again next session. If it passes, farmworkers who make \$15 an hour regular time will receive \$22.50 an hour in overtime pay.

Because all workers in the state will see higher wages and higher wages are associated with better eating, in the long run, there may be more dollars going to organic food and labor-intensive fruit and vegetable production. This would allow these farmers, who have higher costs, to raise prices enough to keep up with labor costs, an increase which would have minimal impact on consumers according to most projections.



Phil Foster poses with workers on his Santa Ana ranch. Farmworkers on this organic farm already receive a minimum of \$15/hour plus bonuses. Photo credit: Phil Foster Ranches

Farmers are also worried about the rising costs of healthcare and the combination of the three—increased minimum wage, new overtime rules, and rising cost of healthcare has some farmers scrambling to meet anticipated rising costs of production. If labor costs increase too much or too fast, farmers may try to reduce costs through capital investments in machinery or by shifting to less labor-intensive crops. The reality, explains another California organic farmer, Paul Muller, is that larger farms can make these investments more easily, and it is small-scale farmers and especially new farmers who will be hit hardest by the trifecta of rising labor costs, particularly in the short run.

Farm work is notoriously difficult and dangerous and though it is highly skilled work, it pays low wages. The new \$15/hour minimum wage will give a needed boost to farmworkers. It will not make them rich, but it will allow families who work in agriculture to more easily meet basic needs. If we want to also ensure that the most vulnerable farmers are also able to thrive, we need equal investment in policies that protect their interests.

“We give all kinds of tax incentives when we want businesses to relocate to our communities. Why aren’t we giving the same incentives to farmers?” Muller asks. Tax breaks to farmers who do not cut back on labor as it becomes more expensive, either because they are committed to providing their communities with decent jobs or because they simply can’t afford capital investments, would give a boost to both farmers and farmworkers.

Local governments give tax incentives to businesses to get them to relocate. Both federal and state governments give tax breaks to businesses that create jobs. Taxpayers also pay billions of dollars annually to subsidize a small percentage of large farms, most of which produce commodity crops like corn and soy that are highly mechanized and provide few jobs. There is a growing movement to allocate federal agricultural subsidies to farmers who practice environmentally sustainable or regenerative practices. Adding social and sustainability criteria would further strengthen the agricultural system, as would providing incentives to diversified farms that create or maintain decent jobs.


If we want farmers, including organic farmers, small-scale farmers, young farmers, and new farmers to succeed in California, and if we want farmers to continue to hire farmworkers despite rising labor costs, we need to address major policy issues such as the federal

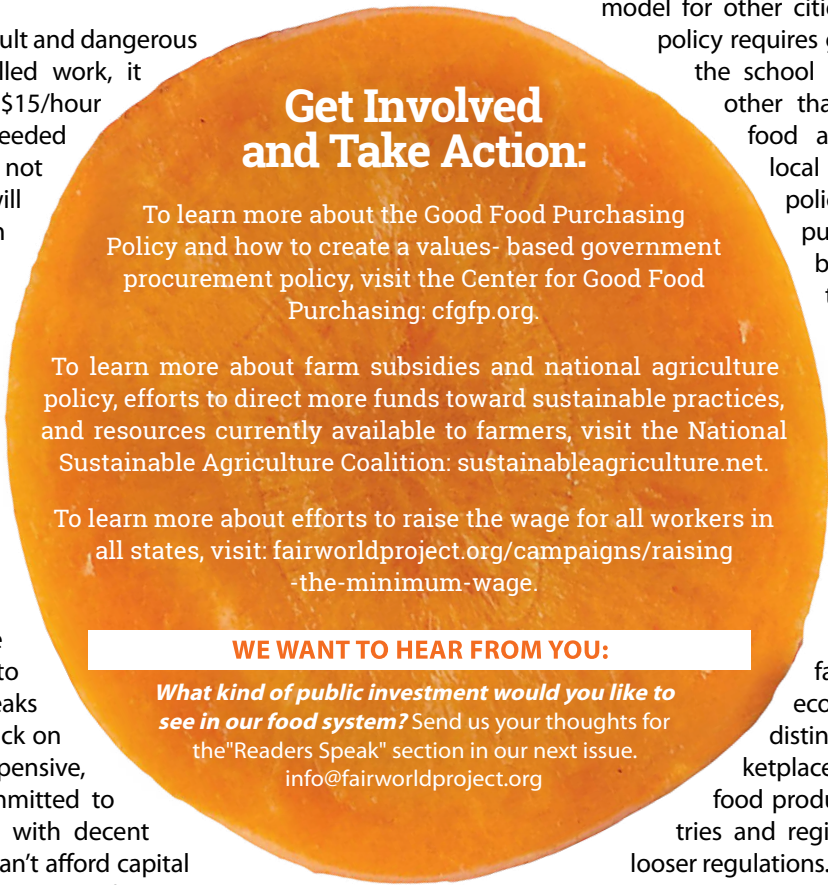
minimum wage (farmers in California paying \$15 an hour will now be competing with farmers in Alabama who need only pay \$7.25 an hour), trade policy (farmers in California will also be competing with farmers in other countries, like Mexico, who can pay less than \$15 a day), and immigration policy. We will also need to be proactive and invest public funds. Here are a few of the many places where public investment can have an impact:

Public procurement policies can ensure California farmers are prioritized in government purchasing decisions. Los Angeles recently adopted a Good Food Purchasing Policy that has been a model for other cities around the country. The policy requires government purchasers, like the school district, to consider factors other than just price when buying food and to give preference to local farmers. These promising policies can be supported by public investment in training buyers and kitchen managers to identify suitable farms, and investment in developing infrastructure to make it easier for small farms to access contracts.

Publicly funded “buy local” or “buy California” programs could educate consumers about the true cost of food and importance of supporting local farmers. Emphasizing local economies would help farmers distinguish themselves in a marketplace where they compete with food produced more cheaply in countries and regions with lower wages and looser regulations.

Increased funding for farmer services through extension or farmer advocacy organizations can give farmers the support they need for their businesses to survive. Farming is difficult work, requiring long hours and a viable business plan. Assistance for farmers, especially those who are new or in transition, in developing a marketing plan and business model that works for their farm can help these farmers weather the changes in labor costs. As in the example of Phil Foster, a good business and marketing plan built on long-term relationships can help a farm thrive, but that plan will look different for each farm.

California is the first state to fully embrace the movement to raise wages for all workers to at least \$15 an hour. As an important agricultural state with enough public investment in key areas, California can also show that agricultural economies, farmers, and farmworkers all thrive in the era of fair pay. 



Get Involved and Take Action:

To learn more about the Good Food Purchasing Policy and how to create a values-based government procurement policy, visit the Center for Good Food Purchasing: cfgfp.org.

To learn more about farm subsidies and national agriculture policy, efforts to direct more funds toward sustainable practices, and resources currently available to farmers, visit the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition: sustainableagriculture.net.

To learn more about efforts to raise the wage for all workers in all states, visit: fairworldproject.org/campaigns/raising-the-minimum-wage.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:

What kind of public investment would you like to see in our food system? Send us your thoughts for the “Readers Speak” section in our next issue. info@fairworldproject.org



Image: Sebastiana Morales, member Chuwila Cooperative

From Weaving to Seed-Saving, Climate Change, and Fighting Monsanto

A Guatemalan woman's story of empowerment through organizing

*an interview with
Yolanda Sebastiana
Calgua Morales*

Working together in cooperatives is an empowering aspect of the fair trade movement for farmers and artisans around the world. On a recent trip to Guatemala, Dana Geffner, Executive Director of Fair World Project, sat down with Yolanda Sebastiana Calgua Morales; a member of the Chuwila Cooperative, a Maya woman, mother and weaver. Yolanda's cooperative sells weavings to Maya Traditions, a pioneering fair trade organization that supports over 500 indigenous rural Mayas by partnering with artisan groups to export their textiles. Yolanda discussed a range of issues impacting her life and community, from weaving to seed-saving, climate change, and Monsanto.

Can you start by telling us a little about yourself?

My name is Yolanda Sebastiana Calgua Morales. I am from the community of Quiejel, Chichicastenango. I am a member of the Chuwila Cooperative and I have two children.

Tell us a little about the origins of the cooperative and how you got organized.

We organized in 1983 when the armed conflict was happening in Guatemala. The men weren't able to leave their homes because of the conflict, so instead we women came together. We had an offer of a loan from an organization called FUNDABESE. We went to our community to let them know about this loan and we ended up with a group of five women. The loan came to 3000 Quetzales (about \$390USD) for each of the five women. We used the money to buy thread to make sample products, and then FUNDABESE placed an order and helped us find markets for the products.

What was happening in the community before you started organizing?

We started organizing because we saw the need of the families. There was a lot of need – the education of the children, malnutrition in many families in the community.

How does your work with Maya Traditions impact your family life?

I only have two children. When I began to attend weaving workshops, I would have to take my baby with me. When I'd get home there would be a lot of diapers to wash and it was a lot of work. My husband told me, "We are only going to have one child, because you go out often and it's hard on you. I want to give my daughter the best. I want to give her an education and everything she needs." I agreed, but then we had another child—my son.

How is money divided among the group?

We started out making the products as a group, but a couple of problems arose. Now everyone makes their own products and sells to the organization. I personally like to make new designs and combine different colors. When there is an expense, we collaborate. For example, if there is an expense, and one woman sells more than the others, the woman who sells more will give a larger contribution to cover the expense than the women who did not sell any product. If there is an order, we divide it up so that everyone has work. Everyone has some sales from the small store we have here. We are a group and we work together, but we do the weaving independently.

Do you own land and farm in addition to your weaving?

Yes, each of us has our own land. Jane, the founder of Maya Traditions, helped me a lot by giving me a loan to buy my land. She didn't charge interest, she just let me pay it off over time through deductions of one third of the price of each weaving. This helped me a lot. On my land I have fruit trees and cultivate my corn and beans. If our fruit trees provide a lot of fruit, then we will sell it. Otherwise it is for our own consumption.

Where do you get your seeds from?

I'll save some of the beans and the corn for seeds to be used in the next season. I remember when they tried to pass the Monsanto law* because a lot of people here went to protest. They didn't want the Monsanto seeds to take over and make our seeds ineffective. We didn't know where these seeds were coming from and if they were going to affect our soil. The municipality called the local authorities and that's what they told them to organize people to protest.

Have there been changes in the weather that have impacted your crop production?

Yes, there has been a lot of change. This year the majority of us didn't grow much corn because of the rain. First, there isn't rain and the corn crop dries. And then later, a lot of rain comes but the corn is already dry. This year, we saw a loss in our production. We are also seeing a lot of other changes—the avocados are drying and there are fewer apples. We've seen the climate change.



What impact is this having on your lives?

It is difficult for us because we are used to a larger harvest. For example, sometimes I would grow up to 400 pounds of beans. I could not eat all those beans so I sold them and was able to invest that money in other things like fertilizer for my corn plants. But now it is very different—and we are not producing as much. Before, I was growing 400 pounds of beans, now only 25 pounds. Same with the avocados—there aren't a lot of avocados and the ones we get are very dry.

How has working together created more sustainability for you and your family, and strengthened your community?

Working together as a group has created more opportunities for us and has allowed us to expand our work, not only working in weavings with Maya Traditions, but also in rugs and other products. Through our work together, I have seen more opportunities, and I have seen the impact in my family life and in our community. For example, by working with Maya Traditions, I'm able to pay for my children's education expenses. I'm not solely reliant on my husband. When we need something, we talk about it and make a decision together about what we're going to spend our money on.

Our work has also strengthened our community. When I'm weaving, I do not have time to do all of the chores around the house so I will hire a woman and pay her to help me wash clothes for example. Same with my husband. When he has a job away in Chichicastenango and we have something that needs to be done here, we will hire one of our neighbors, an older man, who doesn't have work. That way we're creating more opportunities and helping to strengthen our community.

The Monsanto Law

The Monsanto Law is the name commonly given to the Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties, passed in 2014 in Guatemala as part of the implementation of CAFTA-DR (the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement). Among other provisions, the law would have granted strict property rights to Monsanto and other producers of transgenic seeds. If those bean or corn seeds that Yolanda's family was saving were found to contain a trace of patented transgenic crops, the family could be sued for patent infringement. In the words of Antonio González from the National Network in Defense of Food Sovereignty and Biodiversity, even if companies chose not to prosecute, "This law is an attack on a traditional Mayan cultivation system which is based on the corn plant but which also includes black beans and herbs; these foods are a substantial part of the staple diet of rural people."^{*}

A diverse group rose up in opposition. Indigenous organizations, joined by a coalition of trade unions, environmental groups, teachers, and many others, took to the streets demanding that the law be canceled. After some delay, the law was finally overturned. This victory of a people's movement for seed and food sovereignty over the profits of multinational corporations is inspiring – and a reminder of the true cost of free trade agreements.

^{*}<http://upside-downworld.org/main/guatemala-archives-33/5042-mayan-peoples-movement-defeats-monsanto-law-in-guatemala>, accessed 5/19/16.

Fair Cities

What will the just economy of the future look like? We asked for your suggestions for cities across North America that are living examples of fair trade values in action. Is yours on the list?

MINNEAPOLIS/ST PAUL, *Minnesota*



Peace Coffee, by permission

Minneapolis-St. Paul is a hotbed of fair trade activity. For decades now, local non-profits like the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition have been fighting for more just food and trade policies. Fair trade coffee is plentiful thanks to local fair trade coffee roaster Peace Coffee (their bike delivery program does its part to green the just economy as well!). Fair trade pioneer Equal Exchange has a regional office in town too, and there are smaller fair trade stores like Ten Thousand Villages and Regla del Oro for all your needs!

BURLINGTON, *Vermont*



Beyond My Ken, creative commons license

Burlington, Vermont supports its crunchy college-town reputation with longtime fair trade activism. The Peace & Justice Center has programs in Fair Trade Education, Racial Justice, and Peacework, and over the years they have been the catalyst bringing fair trade policies to local colleges and universities. Local City Market Co-op is the source for all things fair trade, and you don't have to travel far to find fair trade coffee from dedicated companies like Vermont Coffee Company and Vermont Artisan Coffee. Add a stop at Ben and Jerry's, which has progressive wage policies and a history of activism on trade issues, and your journey is complete!

MADISON, *Wisconsin*



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Madison, Wisconsin is a hub of fair trade in the upper Midwest. Want to stock your house with all things fair trade? Stop by SERRV, one of the oldest fair trade organizations in the country. Time to refuel? Countless local coffee shops would be happy to serve up some fair trade coffee, possibly biked there by hometown hero, Just Coffee Co-op. It's possible to get just about everything via a cooperative. In addition to the venerable Willy Street Co-op grocery, there's a co-op bakery, taxi company, and more—even an engineering firm (check out Isthmus Engineering for a new take on tech). The University of Wisconsin brings study and activism together, with students studying fair trade issues all the way to the doctoral level, and a Center for Cooperatives that supports those looking to make a just economy a reality.

TAKOMA PARK, *Maryland*



Takoma Park Silver Springs Cooperative

Takoma Park, Maryland has a long history as a community of activists. Sometimes called "The People's Republic of Takoma Park," this city takes its municipal government seriously, broadening its definition of eligible voters, and declaring its city one of the first nuclear-free zones in the country. Organizations like FairVote and CASA de Maryland work to secure basic rights and democracy for all people. At the heart of town, Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op provides ready access to fair trade foods, and Fair Day's Play has the fun and games all covered.

MONTREAL, *Québec*



Montreal is known as a charming cosmopolitan city, and that includes plenty of fair trade options. With Montreal host to the World Social Forum in 2016, fair traders won't have to travel far. Cooperatively owned fair trade coffee importer Cooperative Coffees has a hub in the city, and you can find beans all over town from committed companies like Santropol and Café Rico. Organizations like Equiterre are working toward a sustainable and fair future for all. And if that's not enough, students at McGill University marked their designation as a fair trade campus by baking the world's largest brownie—4,000 pounds with all fair trade ingredients!

LOS ANGELES, *California*



Los Angeles is making strides towards fairness across its massive economy. The Los Angeles Unified School District and the City of L.A. have recently adopted the Good Food Purchasing Policy committing to five fundamental values in sourcing the 750,000 meals they serve daily. Those five values—building a strong local food economy, environmental sustainability, a valued food industry workforce, humane treatment of animals, and high nutritional quality—stretch the definition of fair trade to encompass a holistic vision of a more just food system, and provide a model for other cities. Los Angeles also has the largest concentration of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. Long synonymous with sweatshops, groups like the Garment Worker Center are fighting for change by organizing and empowering the low-wage workers who dominate the garment industry. 🇺🇸

If you want to get more involved in building a just economy, see if your town is involved in a Fair Trade Towns campaign. Although the focus is primarily on fair trade purchases, there is room to engage in policy issues and broader activism within the program.



Radio CATA

by Meghan Hurley

A Radio Station to Empower the Latino Community

In November of 2015, CATA, The Farmworkers Support Committee, officially launched Radio CATA, its own Spanish-language non-commercial low-power FM radio station in Bridgeton, New Jersey. The radio station began as a way to reach out to the immigrant community and engage them in CATA's mission of organizing to fight for the rights they deserve. CATA members see the radio station as a crucial communication tool to build unity among Latinos as they struggle for justice in their workplaces and communities.

CATA members worked hard for more than a year, planning and fundraising to get the station up and running this past November. They participated in all aspects of the station construction, from soldering the cables to climbing the roof to install the antenna. The station plays on 102.5 FM in Bridgeton and is streaming online for the rest of the world to hear at www.radiocata.com.

Through the radio station, CATA provides news reports and information on issues concerning the migrant community—immigration, workers' rights, food justice—as well as local community announcements of CATA's meetings, trainings, workshops, and other activities. A space has been created to talk about questions and concerns that members have in their workplaces and communities. There is also music, live programming, a weekly hour-long program on current events and situations facing the community.

Since its first broadcast, Radio CATA has grown into a place of entertainment, education, and empowerment for its listeners.

CATA Mission: *CATA, The Farmworker Support Committee, is a non-profit, member-based organization governed by and comprised of farmworkers and migrant workers who are actively engaged in the struggle for better working and living conditions. CATA's mission is to empower and educate its members through leadership development and capacity building. Projects and campaigns are undertaken with the goal of achieving meaningful and lasting improvements, rather than mere reforms to a legal and economic system that is structurally biased against them. CATA currently works with the Latino migrant community in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.*



Just Economy Quiz

How much do you really know?



1. Every five years, Congress passes legislation covering conservation programs, farm subsidies, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and virtually all other domestic food and agriculture policies. What is the common name of this legislation?

- A. TPP
- B. Farm Bill
- C. Food Stamp Adjustment Act
- D. Farmer and Consumer Joint Bill of Rights



2. Which state was the first to pass legislation to phase in a \$15/hour minimum wage for all, including restaurant workers and farmworkers?

- A. New York
- B. Washington
- C. Oregon
- D. California



3. What has NAFTA's impact been on fruit imports to the U.S. from Mexico, where labor is cheaper and farmworkers are paid as low as \$10/DAY?

- A. Fruit imports have been increasing by about 20% each year as companies move production across the border where they can pay farmworkers less money.
- B. Although at first the U.S. imported more fruits and vegetables from Mexico, thanks to the rise of CSAs, the U.S. now imports less produce than before NAFTA.
- C. Imports of fruits that can't be grown in the U.S. have increased tenfold, but domestic farmers maintain their competitive advantage for produce they are able to grow—a win/win for consumers who now have better access to both local and exotic produce.
- D. The U.S. imports approximately the same amount of fruit from Mexico as before NAFTA, but it is less expensive, granting low-income families better access to healthy food.



4. The Cotton Campaign is a coalition of human rights, labor, investor, and business organizations. What is its goal?

- A. Increase the price and market for cotton by educating consumers on the benefits of cotton over synthetic fibers.
- B. Get dirty cotton money out of politics.
- C. End the state systems of forced labor in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan's cotton sector.
- D. All of the above.



5. What is food sovereignty?

- A. The idea that the people who produce, distribute, and eat food should control their own food production, distribution, and governing policies.
- B. The idea that food really does rule the world.
- C. A certification that competes with fair trade and organic in the market to capture ethical consumers.
- D. A loose affiliation of independent natural products stores.



6. What is one concern of activists opposed to free trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)?

- A. These agreements will drive a "race to the bottom" by encouraging large multinational corporations to shift manufacturing jobs to countries that pay the lowest wages and have the lowest labor rights protections.
- B. The activists who oppose these agreements are fervent participants of the local food movement who would rather learn to grow coffee in greenhouses in the United States than trade with another country.
- C. Opponents of "free trade" believe that they will be required to give away goods for "free."
- D. Opponents have questioned whether we should focus on universal drone delivery of consumer goods rather than rules for outdated modes of trade



7. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), which workers are most likely to be killed, injured, or get sick from their jobs?

- A. Healthcare, garbage collection, and mining workers
- B. Construction, mining, and agriculture workers
- C. Agriculture, factory, and administrative office workers
- D. Professional drivers, construction workers, and teachers.



8. Which of the following ingredients might you expect to find certified as fair trade?

- A. Coconut (oil or water)
- B. Cotton
- C. Sugar
- D. All of the above

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