



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Coalition of Immokalee Workers demand fair food agreement from Chipotle restaurant, 2006-2012

2006

to: October

2012

**Country:** United States

**Location City/State/Province:** *Denver, Colorado*

**Location Description:** *The campaign focused on Denver, where the Chipotle headquarters are located, though the campaign was national, and international at some points.*

### Goals:

[From the CIW]:

The Fair Food Program taps the unique powers of all the elements of our country's food industry:

\*of consumers, to demand the highest ethical standards for food production;

\*of food retailers, to use their tremendous buying power both to demand higher labor standards of their suppliers and help raise farmworkers out of poverty through a price that supports sustainable production;

\*of growers, to continuously improve their operations and meet consumer demand, keeping pace with an evolving marketplace, and,

\*of farmworkers, to help expose and fix the worst abuses and apply their unique knowledge toward modernizing, and humanizing, our farm labor system.

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 167. Pray-in

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 167. Pray-in
- 178. Guerrilla theatre

**Methods in 3rd segment:**

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 167. Pray-in

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 167. Pray-in

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 167. Pray-in

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 038. Marches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 167. Pray-in

**Notes on Methods:**

While the methods remained generally constant throughout the campaign segments, the frequency and scale of them differed and escalated over time. The campaign was primarily decentralized in that groups would periodically hold protests, pray-ins and events in local Chipotle restaurants. There were many pray-ins that were the result of interfaith organizing among faith groups.

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Economic Justice

Human Rights

**Group characterization:**

- Primarily farm workers of Latin American and Caribbean descent

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Lionel Perez, Gerardo Reyes, Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

**Partners:**

Alliance for Fair Food

**External allies:**

Student/Farmworker Alliance, Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida, Rabbis for Human Rights – North America, various Unitarian congregations and Quaker meetings,

**Involvement of social elites:**

Dozens of elite people and organizations signed a letter in 2009

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Additional notes on joining/exiting order:**

Joining order not known

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 1 year*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Chipotle restaurants (Steve Eills, CEO)

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known

**Campaigner violence:**

Not known

**Repressive Violence:**

Not known

## Success Outcome

### Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

### Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

### Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

### Notes on outcomes:

Not only did the CIW win their Chipotle campaign, but they also led to other wins in the CIW Fair Food Campaign.

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In 2006, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) began what would become a 6-year campaign against Chipotle for fair food and farmworker rights. The CIW, “a membership-led farmworker organization of mostly Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs throughout the state of Florida,” had been organizing in Immokalee since 1993. Over time, they have won historic campaigns.

Their central goal, prominently included in their website, “to improve wages and working conditions for Florida tomato pickers by calling on major buyers of tomatoes to pay a premium of one penny more per pound for their tomatoes, ensure that this penny is passed down directly to farmworkers, and work together with the CIW to establish and implement a code of conduct in their supply chains.”

Most famous for their Taco Bell campaign from 2001-2005 (see Coalition of Immokalee Workers campaign against Taco Bell (Boycott the Bell), 2001-2005), the CIW has also successfully negotiated contracts (including pay raises for tomato harvesters) with Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, McDonald’s, Burger King, Bon Appétit Management Co, Compass Group, Aramark, and Sodexo. Chipotle was the 11th company to sign the agreement.

When the campaign launched, the CIW distributed posters along with Just Harvest USA (an allied organization), online and in paper, explaining that “Workers are paid virtually the same piece rate (an average of \$0.50 per 32 lb. bucket) as they were 30 years ago. At this rate, a worker must pick almost 2.5 tons of tomatoes to earn Florida minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday. Most workers earn less than \$12,000 per year.” Additionally, Florida farmworkers lacked overtime pay, health insurance, sick leave, paid vacation and the protected right to organize for improved working conditions. These statistics were common to all of the CIW target corporations.

On 8 August 2008, college students working with United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), in collaboration with the Student/Farmworker Alliance, Student Action with Farm Workers and Student Labor Action Project, issued a letter condemning Chipotle’s lack of commitment to human rights and dignity. These groups were instrumental in maintaining the decentralized nature of the campaign, including small-scale protests and pray-ins at Chipotle franchises across the country.

In 2008, the CIW and their allies launched the “Chipocracy Tour” from 20 September to 12 October, during which organizers, workers and allies went on a road trip around the Midwest, stopping for actions at the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence, then Wichita, Kansas, and Austin, Texas and finally a multi-day protest in Denver, Colorado. They also gave out free, ethical burritos along the way. The Denver contingency managed to meet with Tim Spong, the Chipotle Vice President of Loss Prevention, with whom they shared 85,000 signatures on the National Petition to End Sweatshops and Slavery in the Fields. They also performed street theater.

Simultaneously, allies with the Alliance for Fair Food and the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI), released a position paper with research and a series of persuasive columns. This document, entitled “Challenging Chipocrisy: ‘Food with Integrity’ Must Respect Farmworkers’ Human Rights” specifically targeted (and disproved) Chipotle’s “Food with Integrity” slogan.

The CIW reports that Chipotle ignored the campaign for the first three years and denied any need for change, citing their commitment to animal rights. Then, Chipotle claimed to have “met the CIW demands” without actually signing the agreement or recognizing “farmworkers as human beings [and] essential partners in the changes we [the CIW] seek.”

On 15 June 2009, the CIW in collaboration with dozens of food justice affiliated people and organizations issued a letter addressed to Steve Eells, Chipotle’s CEO, urging him to compete with leading industry groups that have already agreed to work with the CIW, among them, Bon Appetit, a national-scale food company.

During the last year and a half of the campaign, organizers like Jake Ratner (with Just Harvest USA) and Lionel Perez (with the CIW) escalated the campaign. In May 2011, University of Colorado students protested the commencement address given by Chipotle CEO Steve Eells. On 1 May 2012, protesters affiliated with the Occupy movement condemned a Chipotle during a march through New York City.

25 July 2012 was an International Day of Action with the Fair Food Campaign. The CIW and Just Harvest coordinated protests at Chipotle locations in 25 cities. The tactics were many, and included flyering, coalition building, marching, letter writing, photo petitions, and interfaith organizing.

The turning point of the campaign took place on 6 October 2012, when the CIW and allied organizations announced a large-scale protest of the national Chipotle event called Cultivate, which was intentioned to bring together acclaimed chefs and consumers and launch an Asian-themed upscale fast-food restaurant with tofu wraps similar to Chipotle’s Mexican style burritos. The day before the event, Chipotle decided to sign the Fair Food Agreement and the CIW cancelled the protest.

When news of the signing was released, there was widespread media coverage in the United States.

Said Gerardo Reyes of the CIW, “With this agreement, we are laying down a foundation upon which we all – workers, growers, and Chipotle – can build a stronger Florida tomato industry for the future. But more than this, today’s news marks a turning point in the sustainable food movement as a whole, whereby, thanks to Chipotle’s leadership, farmworkers are finally recognized as true partners – every bit as vital as farmers, chefs, and restaurants – in bringing ‘good food’ to our tables.”

Chris Arnold, communications director at Chipotle, released a statement underscoring their long-time commitment to sustainability and ethics.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

Previous CIW wins, including Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, McDonald’s, Burger King, Bon Appetit and Sysco.

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