



# Florida Modern-Day Slavery Museum

An examination of the history and evolution of slavery in Florida's fields.



The Florida Modern-Day Slavery Museum is exhibited on the National Mall on June 14, 2010.

photo by Fritz Myer

“The Florida Modern Slavery museum is an invaluable enterprise for educating the citizens of Florida and the nation on the continuing absence of economic justice for low income workers, especially agricultural workers. For too long, political representatives and ordinary citizens have ignored the recurring instances of enslavement in contemporary Florida. Indeed, for too long, there has been insufficient light shining in on the low pay and indentured working conditions of agricultural workers in this state. The mobile Florida Modern Slavery museum is impressive and imaginative approach to shedding new light on these old issues. There is much we can learn from this endeavor and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the enlightening organization responsible for this educational tour.”

**Dr. Patrick Mason**

Professor of Economics, and  
Director, African American Studies Program  
Florida State University

“There is real slavery in the fields of Florida. This is not about lousy jobs, but violent control, vicious exploitation, and the potential for serious harm and even death. Even more heartbreaking is the fact that there has never been a day in the history of Florida agriculture without some amount of slavery tainting the food grown there. That food leaves the hands of slaves and ends up in the meals we eat with our families.

It is an ugly problem and we cannot solve problems we do not understand. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is one of the most effective anti-slavery groups on earth. Their new traveling museum helps all of us learn what we need to know in order to bring this crime to an end. This is a living museum that restores the right to life. This is not a dry and academic collection of dusty artifacts (and as a Professor I know about dry and dusty!). Bring the traveling museum to your town, church, library, or convention. Then take your children and friends and family. It is so much more than learning, it is our chance to be part of ending slavery.”

**Dr. Kevin Bales**

President, Free the Slaves  
Emeritus Professor, Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation  
University of Hull

“A century and a half after the Civil War, forms of slavery continue to exist in the world, including in the United States. This Mobile Museum brings to light this modern tragedy and should inspire us to take action against it.”

**Dr. Eric Foner**

DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University  
Author of many works on slavery and its aftermath in the US, including  
“Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877”

# Introduction

Modern-day slavery in Florida agriculture cannot be understood in a vacuum. It is not separate from the past, rather its roots extend deep in the state's history. While the phenomenon of forced labor has taken many forms over the past four centuries in Florida agriculture, the industry has never been entirely free of the scourge of slavery.

Though the extent of slavery in Florida agriculture has diminished over the centuries, one thing has remained constant: farmworkers have always been, and remain today, the state's poorest, least powerful workers. If we are to abolish slavery once and for all in Florida agriculture, we must pull it up from the roots by addressing farmworker poverty and powerlessness.

## Pre-Civil War Chattel Slavery

Over the first two centuries of Spanish control, chattel slavery existed in both law and custom, yet relatively few enslaved Africans were imported. Rather, colonial authorities in St. Augustine utilized a *cacique* labor draft system whereby young indigenous men planted and harvested corn essential for the colony's survival.<sup>1</sup>

After Great Britain gained control of Florida in 1763, South Carolina emigrant planters began developing large-scale commercial agriculture, particularly rice and indigo cultivation, along the St. John's River. Enslaved Africans and their descendents provided the main labor source during this time. Spain regained control of Florida following the American



Advertisement for runaway slave.

Source: *Jacksonville Courier*, April 16, 1835.

1 Tamara Spike, "St. Augustine's Stomach: Corn and Indian Labor in Spanish Florida," in Robert Cassanello and Melanie Shell-Weiss (eds), *Florida's Working-Class Past: Current Perspectives of Labor, Race, and Gender from Spanish New Florida to the New Immigration*, Gainesville, 2009, pp. 17-27.

Revolution, and the northeastern coast became a key hub for importing slaves to North America after the US Congress imposed the 1807 international slave trade ban.<sup>2</sup>

The US acquired Florida in 1821, sparking a transformation of the territory's political economy and labor conditions. In the decades prior to the Civil War, slaveholders drove ever-larger numbers of bonded laborers to Florida to fuel cotton and sugar production in the fertile swath of land from Escambia county in the west to St. John's county in the east to Alachua county in the south. While traditional antebellum plantations existed, another variant of chattel slavery emerged – known as “pushing” – in which transitory planters sought to maximize their wealth by extracting greater speeds of labor from their enslaved workers and constantly increasing minimum production requirements. “Pushing” required new and harsh forms of torture, and many of its victims viewed it as different in both degree and kind from the system of slavery they had experienced in Virginia and the Carolinas.<sup>3</sup>

During this time, slavery comprised the backbone of the Florida economy.<sup>4</sup> By 1860, the state's total population was 140,424, nearly 44% of whom were enslaved. There were less than 1,000 free African Americans in Florida at the onset of the Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

## Legal and Extra-Legal Servitude After the Civil War

The Thirteenth Amendment abolished the legal institution of slavery in 1865. However, the citizenship and labor rights of newly emancipated Floridians were curtailed as large agricultural and industrial

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2 Edward Baptist, “The Slave Labor Camps of Antebellum Florida and the Pushing System,” in Robert Cassanello and Melanie Shell-Weiss (eds), *Florida's Working-Class Past: Current Perspectives of Labor, Race, and Gender from Spanish New Florida to the New Immigration*, Gainesville, 2009, pp. 44.

3 Ibid., pp. 31-32.

4 Larry Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation*, Gainesville, 2000, p. 254.

5 Historical Census Browser, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu>, accessed January 27, 2010.

interests sought to attract investment with the comparative advantage of a low-wage disenfranchised workforce.<sup>6</sup> These labor relations were maintained through the threat and actual use of violence. Between 1882 and 1930, black Floridians suffered the highest per capita lynching rate in the US with at least 266 killings, many linked to labor disputes.<sup>7</sup> Within a hardening Jim Crow racial caste system, forced labor persisted in a combination of legally sanctioned and extra-legal forms.



Convicts leased to harvest timber. 1910s.

Source: Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives

One example of state-sanctioned slavery that persisted after the Civil War was the convict-lease system, in which counties and the state leased predominantly African American men, often arrested on flimsy vagrancy charges, to nearby farms, phosphate mines and forest industry firms. Mortality rates were high as convicts toiled under inhumane conditions in isolated camps. As one planter notoriously remarked in 1883, “Before the war, we owned the negroes. If a man had a good nigger, he could afford to take care of him... But these convicts: we don’t own ‘em. One dies, get another.”<sup>8</sup> The lease system also served to hold down farm and industrial wages for free workers, black and white, who were forced to compete on the same labor market with their incarcerated counterparts. Florida and Alabama were the last states to abolish their county lease systems in 1923.<sup>9</sup>

Another form of servitude that emerged during this period was debt

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6 Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920*, Berkeley, 2005, p. 12.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

8 Matthew Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*, Columbia, 1996, p. 3.

9 Vivien Miller, *Crime, Sexual Violence, and Clemency: Florida's Pardon Board and Penal System in the Progressive Era*, Gainesville, 2000, pp. 12-52. See also Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South*, London, 1996; and Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to*

peonage. Peonage was most commonly associated with the sharecropping system of contract labor. Specific data for Florida is unknown, yet as many as one-third of all tenant farmers in neighboring Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi were being held against their will in 1900.<sup>10</sup> Nor was peonage strictly confined to cotton farms. Rather, it took root wherever employers were unable to recruit free laborers, that is, in the state's most undesirable and lowest-paid workplaces. In fact, debt peonage was quietly practiced in the backwaters of the Florida turpentine industry until the mid-twentieth-century.<sup>11</sup>

## Migrant Farm Labor and Debt Peonage

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, mid-Atlantic truck farmers began to sell greater quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables to urban markets. This model spread southward with the aid of rail lines and refrigeration technology, and in the 1920s, grower-shippers expanded citrus, sugarcane, and winter vegetable production in central and south Florida. These large-scale operations required a distinctly



Trucker loading cabbages beside road near Belle Glade, Florida. 1939.

Source: Farm Security Administration Photos of Florida.

precarious workforce: one that would arrive just prior to the labor-intensive harvest and leave immediately upon its completion.<sup>12</sup> Growers faced a choice: to attract workers through wages high enough to offset inevitable periods of unemployment and underemployment, or to rely on desperately poor laborers with few other options for survival.

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- 10 Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present*, New York, 1992, p. 107. See also Pete Daniel, *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969*, Urbana, 1990.
  - 11 Jerrell Shofner, "Forced Labor in the Florida Forests: 1880-1950," in *The Journal of Forest History*, 25(1), 1981, pp. 14-25. See also Stetson Kennedy, *Forced Labor in the United States*, transcript of testimony before the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labor, Geneva, October 24, 1952, in the Stetson Kennedy Papers, Archive of Southern Labor History, Georgia State University, Atlanta.
  - 12 Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945*, Chapel Hill, 1997.

In the end, Florida's agricultural firms recruited harvesters from the chaos of Georgia's imploding sharecropping system. These workers – and their labor contractors, known as crewleaders – pieced together an annual migration circuit by harvesting crops along the eastern seaboard.<sup>13</sup> Though the legal structures of chattel slavery and the convict lease system were no longer in place, the racial assumptions of planters that undergirded slavery remained largely undiminished and were translated into the new labor regime. Farmworkers' wages were among the lowest in the state – rivaled only by turpentine and phosphate workers – and in practice, their citizenship and labor rights were virtually nonexistent.<sup>14</sup>

In 1935, farmworkers were denied important New Deal-era workplace protections such as the right to collective bargaining, structurally ensuring farmworker powerlessness in relation to their employers for decades to come.<sup>15</sup> In an echo of earlier sentiments towards convict laborers, one grower bluntly stated in the 1960 television exposé, *Harvest of Shame*, “We used to own our slaves. Now we just rent them.”<sup>16</sup>

Unsurprisingly, forced labor took root in this climate, as well. In 1942, for example, the US Sugar Corporation and four of its managers were indicted on federal peonage charges for holding farmworkers against their will deep within the Everglades. Armed supervisors threatened to shoot workers, some of whom attempted to escape by swimming through canals, stowing aboard company trains, and crossing cane fields on foot.<sup>17</sup>



Cut sugarcane being carried to the trucks for the USSC (United States Sugar Corporation). Clewiston, Florida, 1939.

Source: Farm Security Administration Photos of Florida.

13 Jones, pp. 167-201.

14 Jerrell Shofner, “The Legacy of Racial Slavery: Free Enterprise and Forced Labor in Florida in the 1940s,” in *The Journal of Southern History*, 47(3), 1981, p. 414; see also Jones, pp. 167-201.

15 Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 47.

16 *Harvest of Shame*, Edward R. Murrow and Fred W. Friendly (prods), 55 min., CBS News, 1960.

17 Shofner, “Legacy of Racial Slavery,” p. 416.





Picking beans. Belle Glade, Florida. 1937.

Source: Farm Security Administration Photos of Florida.

Similar farmworker servitude cases were prosecuted in Florida and other southeastern states through the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> The predominant form of forced labor during this era was debt peonage, with debt incurred through charges for rent, food, wine, beer, and cigarettes provided by the employer at exorbitant prices through a “company store” arrangement.

Workers were forced to purchase these items from the employer, and deductions at the end of the week regularly exceeded pay, leaving entire crews of workers in a spiraling system of debt from which they could not escape. Though now somewhat less common, this system persists to the current day, as evidenced by the recent convictions in the case of *U.S. v. Evans*, discussed below.

## Slavery in the Twenty-First Century

Today the Florida agricultural industry remains mired in a human rights crisis made possible by the continuing poverty and powerlessness of farmworkers. In 2008, during a fact-finding visit to Immokalee – a small town at the epicenter of Florida tomato production – Senator Bernie Sanders described the conditions he encountered with these words: “[For Florida farmworkers], the norm is a disaster, and the extreme is slavery.”<sup>19</sup>

Since 1997, the US Department of Justice has successfully prosecuted seven farm labor servitude cases in Florida, prompting one federal official to label the state “ground zero for modern slavery.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, federal indictments uncovering two additional forced labor operations in Florida agriculture were unsealed in July and September

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18 John Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor and the Dark Side of the New Global Economy*, New York, 2007, pp. 40-43. See also Daniel Rothenberg, *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*, Berkeley, 1998, pp. 154-180.

19 *The Nation*, “Slavery in the Union,” January 29, 2008.

20 John Bowe, “Nobodies: Does Slavery Exist in America?” in *New Yorker*, April 21, 2003.

2010. These prosecuted cases meet the high standard of proof and definition of slavery under federal laws, including laws forbidding peonage and indentured servitude passed just after the Civil War during Reconstruction (18 U.S.C. Sections 1581-1589) and the 2000 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. In such situations, captive workers are held against their will by their employers through threats and, all too often, the actual use of violence – including beatings, shootings, and pistol-whippings. The seven successful prosecutions resulted in the liberation of well over 1,000 farmworkers:



Source: 60 Minutes, CBS News. Originally aired January 3, 1993.

**US vs. Flores** – In 1997, Miguel Flores and Sebastian Gomez were sentenced to 15 years each in federal prison on slavery, extortion, and firearms charges, amongst others. Flores and Gomez had a workforce of over 400 men and women in Florida and South Carolina, harvesting vegetables and citrus. The workers, mostly indigenous Mexicans and Guatemalans, were forced to work 10-12 hour days, 6 days per week, for as little as \$20 per week, under the watch of armed guards. Those who attempted escape were assaulted, pistol-whipped, and even shot. The case was brought to federal authorities after five years of investigation by escaped workers and members of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a Florida-based farmworker organization.

**US vs. Cuello** – In 1999, Abel Cuello was sentenced to 33 months in federal prison on slavery charges. He had held more than 30 tomato pickers in two trailers in the isolated swampland west of Immokalee, keeping them under constant watch. Three workers escaped the camp, only to have their boss track them down a few weeks later. The employer ran one of them down with his car, stating that he owned them.

The workers sought help from the CIW and the police, and the CIW worked with the DOJ on the ensuing investigation. Cuello worked for Manley Farms North Inc., a major Bonita Springs tomato supplier. Once out of prison, Cuello easily resumed his chosen profession, supplying labor to Ag-Mart Farms, a tomato company operating in Florida and North Carolina.

**US vs. Tecum** – In 2001, Jose Tecum was sentenced to 9 years in federal prison on slavery and kidnapping charges. He forced a young woman to work against her will both in the tomato fields around Immokalee, and in his home. The CIW assisted the DOJ with the prosecution, including victim and witness assistance.

**US vs. Lee** – In 2001, Michael Lee was sentenced to 4 years in federal prison and 3 years supervised release on a slavery conspiracy charge. He pled guilty to using crack cocaine, threats, and violence to enslave his workers. Lee held his

**“[For Florida farmworkers], the norm is a disaster and the extreme is slavery.”**

**- Senator Bernie Sanders, 2008**

workers in forced labor, recruiting homeless US citizens for his operation, creating a debt through loans for rent, food, cigarettes, and

cocaine. He abducted and beat one of his workers to prevent him from leaving his employ. Lee harvested for orange growers in the Fort Pierce, Florida area.

**US vs. Ramos** – In 2004, Ramiro and Juan Ramos were sentenced to 15 years each in federal prison on slavery and fire-arms charges, and forced to forfeit of over \$3 million in assets. The men, who had a workforce of over 700 farmworkers in the citrus groves of Florida, as well as the fields of North Carolina, threatened workers with death if they were to try to leave, and pistol-whipped and assaulted – at gunpoint – passenger van service drivers who gave rides to farmworkers leaving the area.

The case was brought to trial by the DOJ after two years of investigation by the CIW. The Ramoses harvested for Consolidated Citrus and Lykes Brothers, among others.

**US vs. Ronald Evans** – In 2007, Florida employer Ron Evans was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison on drug conspiracy, financial restructuring, and witness tampering charges, among others. Jequita Evans was also sentenced to 20 years, and Ron Evans Jr. to 10 years. Operating in Florida and North Carolina, Ron Evans recruited homeless US



Farmworker housing at Ron Evans' camp in Palatka, Florida. 2006.

Source: Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

citizens from shelters across the Southeast, including New Orleans, Tampa, and Miami, with promises of good jobs and housing. At Palatka, Florida and Newton Grove, North Carolina area laborcamps, the Evans deducted rent, food, crack cocaine and alcohol from workers' pay, holding them perpetually indebted in what the DOJ called "a form of servitude morally and legally reprehensible." The Palatka labor camp was surrounded by a chain link fence topped with barbed wire, with a No Trespassing sign. The CIW and a Miami-based homeless outreach organization, Touching Miami with Love, began the investigation and reported the case to federal authorities in 2003. In Florida, Ron Evans worked for grower Frank Johns. Johns was 2004 Chairman of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, the powerful lobbying arm of the Florida agricultural industry. As of 2007, he remained the chairman of the group's budget and finance committee.

**US vs. Navarrete** – In December 2008, employers Cesar and Geovanni Navarrete were sentenced to 12 years each in federal prison on charges of conspiracy, holding workers in involuntary servitude, and peonage. They had employed dozens

of tomato pickers in Florida and South Carolina in what US Attorney Doug Molloy called “slavery, plain and simple.”<sup>21</sup> As stated in the DOJ press release on their sentencing, “[the employers] pleaded guilty to beating, threatening, restraining, and locking workers in trucks to force them to work as agricultural laborers... [They] were accused of paying the workers minimal wages and driving the workers into debt, while simultaneously threatening physical harm if the workers left their employment before their debts had been repaid to the Navarrete family.” Workers first reported the abuse to Collier County police, and additional workers sought help from the CIW. The CIW collaborated with the DOJ and the police on the year-long investigation and prosecution.”<sup>22</sup>

## Forging A Solution

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has been a leader of anti-slavery efforts in the state’s agricultural industry for more than a decade, and played a key role in the discovery and investigation of six of the seven Florida



Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ march from East Los Angeles to Irvine, CA. 2004.

Source: Jacques-Jean Tiziou.

slavery prosecutions since 1997. But the CIW’s work goes beyond working with federal civil rights authorities to bring slavery operations to justice after the fact.

In 2001, the CIW launched the Campaign for Fair Food, an innovative, worker-led campaign for the elimination of human rights violations in the US agricultural industry. The campaign identifies the links between the brutal farm labor conditions in US fields and the retail food giants that buy the produce grown in those fields. The high degree of consolidation in the food industry today means that multi-billion dollar brands on the retail end of the

21 *Ft. Myers News-Press*, “Group accused of keeping, beating, stealing from Immokalee laborers,” January 18, 2008.

22 Justice Department, <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2008/December/08-crt-1134.html>, accessed January 27, 2010.

industry not only profit from farmworker exploitation, but actually play an active role in that exploitation by leveraging their volume purchasing power to demand ever-lower prices.<sup>23</sup> Lower produce prices in turn create downward pressure on farmworker wages. The Campaign for Fair Food seeks to reverse that process, enlisting the resources of retail food giants to improve farmworker wages and harnessing their demand to reward growers who respect their workers' rights.



CIW members protest outside of a Taco Bell restaurant. 2002.

Source: Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

Specifically, through its “Fair Food” agreements, the CIW is raising the tomato harvesting wage floor, establishing a voice for farmworkers in the agricultural industry, and enforcing the first-ever market consequences for growers that use forced labor. The power of this model was demonstrated in 2009 following sentencing in the case of *U.S. vs. Navarrete*. For the first time ever, a federal slavery conviction led to direct market consequences for the growers associated with the case, triggering the zero tolerance for slavery provisions in the CIW’s agreements which caused the growers to lose business.

In March 2005, the CIW established the critical precedent of corporate accountability with regard to farmworker wages and working conditions in the fast-food industry through its victory in the four-year Taco Bell Boycott. In April 2007, the gains of the Taco Bell/Yum Brands agreement were reinforced and magnified by an agreement with McDonald’s which, beyond meeting the terms of the Taco Bell agreement, introduced the concept of an eventual industry-wide code of conduct and third party monitoring system designed by and for farmworkers. In May 2008, after a hearing on Florida farm labor abuses in the US Senate, the CIW won another agreement, this time with Burger King. In September 2008, the Campaign moved beyond the fast-food in-

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23 Oxfam America, *Like Machines in the Fields: Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture*, Boston, 2004.

dustry with its first agreement with a supermarket chain, Whole Foods Market. Then in December of 2008, the CIW reached an agreement with the largest fast-food purchaser of tomatoes, Subway Restaurants. Most recently, the Campaign for Fair Food broke into the world of foodservice providers by signing agreements Compass Group, Aramark, Sodexo, and Bon Appetit Management Company.

In March 2009, after meeting in Tallahassee with CIW members and slavery victims, Florida Governor Charlie Crist wrote in an open letter to the CIW:

“I have no tolerance for slavery in any form, and I am committed to eliminating this injustice anywhere in Florida. I unconditionally support the humane and civilized treatment of all employees, including those who work in the Florida agricultural industry. Any type of abuse in the workplace is unacceptable.

I support the Coalition’s Campaign for Fair Food, whereby corporate purchasers of tomatoes have agreed to contribute monies for the benefit of the tomato field workers. I commend these purchasers for their participation...”<sup>24</sup>



CIW members and allies march in Lakeland, Florida. 2009.

Source: Jacques-Jean Tiziou.

labor organizing campaign and as such sent a powerful message to the retail food industry leaders who had yet to support the Fair Food principles.

In late 2010, after fifteen years of tireless organizing, the CIW

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24 Charlie Crist, “Memorandum: Letter to Coalition of Immokalee Workers,” <http://www.flgov.com/release/10630>, accessed January 27, 2010.

reached groundbreaking agreements to extend its “Fair Food” principles to farms representing over ninety percent of Florida’s tomato industry. These direct agreements with the growers of the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange stand to usher in a new era of agricultural labor relations – born of a union of human rights principles and corporate accountability strategies – unlike anything previously experienced in Florida or anywhere along the east coast of the United States. While the implementation of these new agreements is still in its infancy, it is already clear that farmworkers themselves will be playing an active and important role in cleansing the industry of the very worst abuses – forced labor, debt peonage, large-scale wage theft, sexual harassment – that have plagued it since the emergence of the migrant labor system in the early twentieth century.

Today, though much progress has been made, much remains to be done. Specifically, the crucial supermarket industry has been slow to adopt the higher standards accepted by the fast-food and foodservice industries, continuing to turn a blind eye to the inhumane conditions in the fields where its tomatoes are grown. Emblematic of this indifference has been the reaction of Florida’s largest grocer (and the state’s largest privately-held company), Publix.

When the CIW asked Publix to adopt the principles of the Campaign for Fair Food – principles, including a zero tolerance policy for slavery, designed to eliminate forced labor and its causes – Florida’s largest supermarket chain turned its back. Publix, Ahold, Kroger and Wal-Mart all pack a very heavy punch when it comes to their market power in the produce industry. And with great power comes great responsibility -- both for the poverty and brutal working conditions from which they have profited for so many years, and for the work of reforming farm labor conditions in their supply chains that lies ahead.

If the goal of a more modern, more humane Florida tomato industry is to be fully realized, the supermarket giants must do their part.



## Support for the Museum

“My colleagues and I at Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative support the continuing efforts of the Coalition of Imokalee Workers to draw attention to the abuse of farmworkers’ human rights through the mobile museum on modern-day slavery in Florida. We wish you success in ending company practices that undermine human rights and dignity.”

### The Honorable Mary Robinson

former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and  
President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative

“Slavery is like a resurgent disease in human affairs – one which will never die unless a very real commitment is made to protect American freedoms. When we learn of continued slavery in the fields of Florida – and the deaths, rape, debt peonage, threats, and ruined lives that go with it – we need to realize: this is a threat to our values and our way of life.

Florida agriculture has yielded more cases of modern slavery than any state in America. Why? Because the most powerful players in the supply chain from farm to table, such as Publix, Sysco, and Walmart, refuse to demand that their suppliers comply with American laws or acknowledge their role in helping the rest of us maintain a free society.

The Mobile Modern-day Slavery Museum is here to open our eyes to the age-old battle between freedom and darkness that is as alive today as in the distant past.”

### John Bowe

author “Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor and the Dark Side of the New Global Economy”

“Our government has referred to South Florida as ‘ground zero for slavery in America.’ In fighting the constant and daunting battle against slavery and human trafficking, the hardest part is getting the word out. And yet, without the awareness that this blight exists in our country today, there can be no victory, no success in eradicating it. The Coalition of Immo-

kalee Workers has taken their brilliant and time-proven campaign against modern-day slavery and worker abuse on the road, by creating a traveling museum. This is not a 'museum' in the traditional sense. It will educate you, it will anger you, and it will provide you with the incentive to take action. Simply by viewing this exhibition, you will have accomplished the first basic step in joining the fight: awareness. The CIW's mobile 'museum-on-wheels' is available to you, your family and friends; there can be no excuse for letting this opportunity go by. Sponsor it, see it, then see it again. It will tell you what you need to know about recognizing and eliminating slavery in our farms and fields, as well as in our cities and towns."

**Ron Soodalter**

co-author, "The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today"

"Today, as in the past, many Florida field workers lack the basic civil rights, and human rights, that would guarantee them fair treatment and fair compensation for their strenuous labors. All Americans have a civic duty to learn about the hardships and struggles of the men, women, and children who grow our food, for these workers are our neighbors and fellow citizens. The shameful conditions exposed in this exhibit are part of a larger history of coerced labor in Florida. In order to overcome that history, we must confront it, and enlist the energies of employers, political leaders, retail food industry leaders, and consumers to eradicate once and for all the abusive labor practices documented here. I commend the Coalition of Immokalee Workers for launching this traveling exhibit, which illustrates in such a graphic and moving way the plight of many Florida farmworkers today."

**Dr. Jacqueline Jones**

Professor of History, University of Texas at Austin

"Slavery. In the 21st century. It is not something drawn up from the macabre mind of Stephen King or Dean Koontz. As this exhibit makes clear, this is not fiction. It is real. Painfully real. Four hundred years of slavery in Florida, and 145 of those coming after the Civil War, are the result of the continued violation and debasement of workers' human rights. As docu-

ment after document, photograph after photograph, court case after court case all attest, human bondage is wrong. There is no gray area. Yet, still it persists in the lush agricultural fields of Florida. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best when he averred that “When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.” But this exhibit and the tireless efforts of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers make clear that this battle is far from over.”

**Dr. Carol Anderson**

Associate Professor of African American Studies  
Emory University

“Florida has a long and sordid history of forced labor, including chattel slavery, the convict-lease, and debt peonage. Unfortunately, even now workers trapped in slavery still pick some of the crops that we eat every day. Modern-day slavery persists because it remains in the shadows. CIW is one of the leading grassroots antislavery organizations working today to expose the conditions of peonage in Florida agriculture. Their ‘Mobile Modern-day Slavery Museum’ will bring this practice to light and help secure justice for the state’s farmworkers. I urge you to pay attention to this important event when it comes to your community.”

**Dr. Alex Lichtenstein**

Associate Professor of History, Florida International University

The Florida Modern Slavery Museum is an important and innovative travelling exhibit that reminds us that coerced labour and agricultural slavery are not just problematic parts of Florida’s history but are very real and disturbing contemporary issues. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ Fair Food Campaigns and many other efforts to ensure fair wages and working conditions for farm workers deserve our attention and support.

**Dr. Vivien Miller**

Associate Professor of American History, University of Nottingham

**For more information,  
please visit  
[www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org)**

# Organizational Endorsers

Amnesty International US

Anti-Slavery International, UK

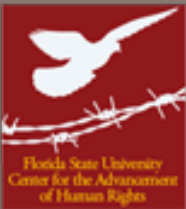
Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and  
Human Rights

Realizing Rights: The Ethical  
Globalization Initiative

Free the Slaves

Freedom Network

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC)



## **“Ground zero for modern-day slavery,”**

- Justice Department official, in reference to South Florida, as quoted in the New Yorker.

**“These convicts, we don’t own ‘em. One dies, get another.”**  
Employer of leased convicts, 1883.

**“We used to own our slaves, now we just rent them.”**  
- Grower quoted in 1960 CBS documentary “Harvest of Shame.”

**“Should the Ramoses be in prison? No. You need the Ramoses to keep the price of oranges down.”** - Nelson Rodríguez Varela, attorney for Juan Ramos, sentenced to 15 years on slavery and firearms charges.

**“When farmers need fruit-pickers or other workers, they deal through him. To put him away would be putting many people out of work.”** - Florida Judge Harold Smith during sentencing or crewleader Wardell Williams, who had been found guilty of manslaughter in the shooting death of his common-law wife.

**“I think Ron Evans is an above-average crewleader.”** - Grower Frank Johns, commenting on Ron Evans before Evans was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison for keeping his workers in what federal prosecutors called “a form of servitude.”

**“The chain does purchase tomatoes from the two farms but pays fair market price.”** - St. Augustine Record quoting Publix spokesperson Dwaine Stevens in response to a question about whether Publix continues to purchase tomatoes from two farms where the Navarrete crews picked tomatoes.

**“The tractor doesn’t tell a farmer how to run a farm.”**  
- Anonymous Immokalee-area grower in response to question about why Immokalee growers refused to talk to farmworkers on a month-long hunger strike who were calling for dialogue.

**“This case is about people with power and the powerless. This is a case about modern-day slavery in the United States.”** - Federal prosecutor Susan French during the Tecum prosecution.

**“You’re the son of a bitch who’s taking away all my people!”**  
- Ramiro Ramos to José Martínez, before pistol whipping him during a brutal assault on a van transportation service that later figured in the Ramos prosecution.

**“Slavery, plain and simple.”** - Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Molloy during trial of the Navarrete slavery operation.