

# BUSINESS ETHICS NETWORK

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*of Corporate Ethics International*  
[www.businessethicsnetwork.org](http://www.businessethicsnetwork.org)

## **Media Release**

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## **IMMOKALEE FARM WORKERS RECEIVE TOP INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR TACO BELL BOYCOTT**

### **Awards go to Campaigns Targeting Citigroup, Staples, Victoria's Secret, Dell, Mt. Olive**

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Last evening, in a speech that brought the audience to tears and to its feet, Florida farm worker Gerardo Reyes Chávez accepted the top prize at the **2005 BENNY Awards** on behalf of the **Coalition of Immokalee Workers**.

The BENNY Awards were announced by the international **Business Ethics Network**.

Chávez spoke of the long struggle of the Immokalee tomato pickers in Florida. "**We were basically invisible in the paradise that is Florida,**" he said.

After years of unsuccessful strikes and protests against tomato growers to increase wages, in 2001 the Coalition launched a boycott against fast-food giant **Taco Bell**, one of the largest purchasers of tomatoes in the U.S. In early 2005 Taco Bell made an unprecedented agreement to pay the first-ever direct, ongoing payment by a fast-food industry leader to workers in its supply chain to address sub-standard farm labor wages.

Over the past decade, corporate campaigns have become a more common tool for making change, particularly when legislative and political avenues are blocked. "**It is through corporate campaigns, not the political system, that we are seeing the greatest achievements for workers, and in protection of the environment and public health,**" said Mari Margil, spokeswoman for the Business Ethics Network.

### **2005 BENNY Award Winners**

The six winners were selected by members of the Business Ethics Network, from 26 nominated campaigns. ***A brief fact sheet describing each winning campaign is below.***

The top three winners, each receiving \$10,000, are:

- **Taco Bell Boycott:** Coalition of Immokalee Workers
- **Global Finance Campaign:** Rainforest Action Network
- **Mt. Olive Boycott:** Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO

BENNY Awards also went to the:

- **Computer TakeBack Campaign**: Texas Campaign for the Environment, Clean Production Action, Center for Environmental Health, Clean Water Action New England, Basel Action Network, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition
- **Staples Campaign**: ForestEthics & Dogwood Alliance
- **Victoria's Dirty Secret Campaign**: ForestEthics

The Business Ethics Network announced the 2005 BENNY Awards winners on Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, at an awards dinner in San Francisco. The Business Ethics Network (BEN), run by Corporate Ethics International, is a professional association of corporate campaigners working to change corporate practices on issues including labor rights, the environment, and impacts on local communities.

## **FACT SHEET ON THE 2005 BENNY AWARD WINNERS**

### **TACO BELL BOYCOTT Coalition of Immokalee Workers [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org)**

Since 2001, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers – made up of largely of Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs across Florida – conducted protests, marches, even hunger strikes against **Taco Bell**.

Earlier this year, Taco Bell finally agreed to worker demands agreeing to the first-ever direct, ongoing payment by a fast-food industry leader to workers in its supply chain to address sub-standard farm labor wages. Taco Bell is now paying 1 cent more per pound of tomatoes it buys from Florida growers, an increase of roughly 75% for workers picking tomatoes for Taco Bell.

### **GLOBAL FINANCE CAMPAIGN Rainforest Action Network [www.ran.org](http://www.ran.org)**

Through the Global Finance Campaign, the private financial sector has moved from refusing to acknowledge its role in environmental crises to openly taking responsibility for the negative consequences of its investments. The campaign included the sending of thousands of posters to the CEOs of **Citigroup** and **JPMorgan Chase**, thousands of customers canceling their credit cards, and nationwide demonstrations.

As a result we've seen the world's largest bank, Citigroup develop its first environmental policies, followed by, JPMorgan Chase and **Bank of America**. Through these policies the banks are now conducting baseline accounting of both their direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions, substantially expanded requirements on business due diligence with clients that have a significant negative impact of the environment, and in some cases, a refusal to finance projects or clients because of unsustainable practices.

### **MT. OLIVE BOYCOTT Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO**

[www.floc.com/boycott/boycott\\_menu.html](http://www.floc.com/boycott/boycott_menu.html)

The boycott of the **Mt. Olive Pickle Company** began in 1999 to bring the company to the negotiating table with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. The farm workers who harvest cucumbers for Mt. Olive were seeking a contract that would improve wages and working conditions. Due to an exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act, farm workers do not have the right to organize like other workers.

After picketing, student demonstrations, endorsement of the boycott by churches and over 200 other organizations, Mt. Olive signed an agreement to enhance the economic situation of the migrant farm workers. In addition, a contract was negotiated and implemented with the North Carolina Growers' Association to ensure the proper representation of 7,000 guest workers from Mexico with regard to wage and working conditions grievances. Over 300 formal worker complaints have since been processed and resolved.

**COMPUTER TAKEBACK CAMPAIGN Texas Campaign for the Environment, Clean Production Action, Center for Environmental Health, Clean Water Action New England, Basel Action Network, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition [www.computertakeback.com](http://www.computertakeback.com)**

The Computer TakeBack Campaign is working to have computer manufacturers institute "take back" programs of old products to recycle or refurbish them. When electronics producers are responsible for their products at disposal time, they have an incentive to create less toxic, more easily recycled products in the first place.

The campaign has successfully changed the practices of computer giants including **Dell**, which has agreed to offer consumers free take back of old computers and monitors as part of their on-line ordering system. As well, **Apple Computer** agreed to offer recycling of iPods at their stores.

**STAPLES CAMPAIGN: ForestEthics & Dogwood Alliance [www.forestethics.org](http://www.forestethics.org) [www.dogwoodalliance.org](http://www.dogwoodalliance.org)**

Through hundreds of demonstrations at Staples stores across the U.S., a public service announcement by the rock group REM, and other measures, this successful campaign has seen **Staples** increase its recycled fiber from 5% to 26% thus far. In the first year, this means 1 million trees were spared.

Staples' new environmental department, created as a result of the campaign, has created initiatives on cell phone recycling, recycled paper promotions that benefit charitable organizations like the Boys and Girls Club of America, and printer cartridge recycling. **Office Depot** is now engaged and has increased its use of recycled fiber to equal Staples and is working to surpass them.

**VICTORIA'S DIRTY SECRET CAMPAIGN ForestEthics [www.victoriasdirtysecret.net](http://www.victoriasdirtysecret.net)**

**Victoria's Secret** mails out over 1 million catalogs each day, mainly using virgin fiber paper with little or no recycled content. Through this campaign, with hundreds of demonstrations, support from church and conservation groups, and ads in the New York Times, the company has agreed to use high post consumer recycled content in its clearance catalogs, which account for 10% of the catalogs mailed daily. The remaining 90% continue to be printed on paper made predominately from forests, with approximately 25% of the paper coming directly from North America's Great Boreal Forest.