



united students against sweatshops

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PRESS RELEASE
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STUDENTS TELL CHIPOTLE: SUPPORT FARMWORKER RIGHTS! Over 100 students demand that Chipotle eliminate abuses against Florida farmworkers

DENVER – On Friday, August 8, over one hundred members of United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) will protest outside the headquarters of Chipotle Mexican Grill, demanding that the quickly-growing burrito chain take proactive steps to improve the wages and working conditions of the farmworkers who harvest tomatoes for the fast-food industry. The protest is part of an ongoing national campaign led by the Florida-based Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW).

“Chipotle claims to be a leader in social responsibility in the fast-food industry, but by refusing to partner with the CIW, the corporation is perpetuating exploitation in the fields,” says Claudia Ebel, USAS member at the University of Colorado at Boulder. “If ‘Food With Integrity’ is a sincere commitment to social responsibility, and not just a marketing gimmick, Chipotle needs to join other top fast-food companies to ensure that the rights of the farmworkers who harvest our food are respected.”

The CIW, an award-winning farmworker organization known for its exposure of several modern-day slavery operations in Florida agriculture, is appealing to major fast-food industry players – including Denver-based Chipotle Mexican Grill – to guarantee full respect for the human rights of the workers who pick tomatoes in their supply chains. The CIW has already reached precedent-setting agreements with Yum! Brands (owner of Taco Bell and Pizza Hut, among others), McDonald’s and Burger King. Chipotle is a leading fast-casual restaurant chain that has highly publicized the leveraging of its purchasing power to promote humane and responsible practices in its suppliers’ operations - an program it calls “Food With Integrity” - but has been unwilling to cooperate with the farmworkers’ group.

In response to two years of mounting public pressure that it work with the CIW, Chipotle instead claims that it has suspended Florida tomato purchases and is unilaterally investigating conditions in Florida agriculture. These well-documented conditions include wage rates that have been essentially stagnant for three decades, sub-poverty annual earnings, long hours with no right to overtime and no right to organize, and, in the most extreme cases, actual modern-day slavery.

“Chipotle has never provided any results from its supposed investigation, nor has it verified from where it's now sourcing its tomatoes, how the workers in those fields fare, or even that it has indeed stopped purchasing from Florida. The only thing it can assure is that it has delayed the hopes of thousands of farmworkers in Florida to enjoy more dignified working conditions,” stated Marc Rodrigues, co-coordinator of the Student/Farmworker Alliance.

WHAT: Protest at Chipotle headquarters to demand justice for farmworkers. **VISUALS:** burrito-shaped piñata; giant map depicting home cities of USAS members; large signs.

WHEN: Friday, August 8, 12:30pm to 1:30pm

WHERE: Rally at 16th St. & Market followed by march to Chipotle HQ, 1543 Wazee St., Denver

WHO: Students from across the country and Denver-area supporters.

For more information, visit www.ciw-online.org & www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org

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