**Ensemble Leadership and Worker-Driven Social Responsibility**

**Defeat Globalized Modern-Day Slavery**

By Grace Ann Rosile, Professor of Management, New Mexico State University

Ensemble Leadership and The Fair Foods Standards Council (FFSC):

Putting Egalitarian Principles into Practice

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and their affiliated organization the Fair Foods Standards Council (FFSC) have achieved almost unheard-off effectiveness and Presidential-award-winning levels of success in bringing about speedy real-world changes.

The content of their monitoring programs is very much influenced by the participative and egalitarian processes they employ. These processes include a system of leadership which we describe as “Ensemble.” This leadership style colors all the undertakings of the CIW and the FFSC. Key features of

With their motto of “everyone a leader,” the CIW lives and operates in a much more egalitarian fashion than most business-related organizations in the U.S.. The CIW uses worker-to-worker education programs to convey to workers their rights and responsibilities when working for CIW “Participating Growers.” The Participating Growers in South Florida are mostly the tomato growers. The Participating Buyers are the fast food and grocery chains which purchase the tomatoes. After years of heartbreaking hunger strikes and church-based partnerships, the CIW discovered was that putting pressure on the tomato growers had little to no effect on agricultural labor practices.

Growers subcontracted the actual agricultural work. Even when growers admitted that abuses occurred in agricultural work, still, because such work was sub-contracted and removed from growers’ immediate influence, even well-intentioned growers felt helpless to address the problems. As John Esformes says in a video clip on the CIW web pages, “xxxx……….(going on for too long, we did not know what to do)”

Our university-based and business-school-based research team has also been operating in a highly egalitarian fashion. We now recognize that our egalitarian processes have been essential to us reaching out as a group to touch the CIW, and to understand how the work of the CIW reflects egalitarianism. Almost unconsciously, we have mimicked the CIW processes of being in the field and then returning to debrief and plan our next moves as a group.

The CIW establishes rights as well as responsibilities using a process they call worker-driven social responsibility. The CIW’s standards-monitoring affiliate, the FFSC, also uses four (4) processes that are key to its success.

FFSC has:

1. worker-driven complaint processes,
2. consequences for violations that are swift and significant,
3. results that are victim-oriented, and
4. interview and operational processes that reflect egalitarianism (ensemble leadership).

Next, we discuss each of these 4 key features of the FFSC.

**WORKER-DRIVEN**

First, just as with the CIW, the FFSC’s processes are worker-driven. The FFSC’s life blood is worker complaints. However, it is widely recognized that most corporate suggestion-boxes and complaint lines are rarely used. With the FFSC, their first year garnered only about 100 complaints, as reported by Judge Laura Safer (Interview May 11, 2017): “It took the first season to gain confidence in the process. (At first) there were only (about) 100 complaints….Now, we have had over 1700 complaints in 6 seasons, (about 3 times the volume of complaints that we had at the start).”

Matt W (Interview, May 11, 2017) “The system is still designed and spearheaded by workers….Workers can make a complaint without fear of retaliation. We take complaints but NOT anonymous ones. We are the megaphone (for their voices), and also the protective barrier for complaints.”

Paying attention to the voices of the workers is crucial.

“Workers know their own industry, (so we interview them), and then we have worker-to-worker education at least one time each harvest. (This way) informed and active workers are the front lines (of this process)….The CIW did try using the outside auditing firm of “Verite” but they did NOT have the model of partnership that the CIW had in mind, nor the depth of monitoring. For our audits at least 50% of the workers are interviewed, not a small sample. This is not done anywhere else. (Also) we have a 24-7 complaint line staffed by our field monitors (who rotate through this job).”

Judge Laura (Int, May 2017)

**CONSEQUENCES**

The second success factor is swift and significant consequences for violations. Matt W. explains “We can suspend growers from Fair Foods, so there are strong actions/consequences, (and violators) can’t sell to 14 (of the largest) tomato buyers. It works this way because (it is) informed by worker experience....” (Matt W.)

“A slap-on-the-wrist fine was not effective.” (Judge Laura)

Victor remembers “It used to be workers could complain in Florida but could be threatened (by the bosses) ‘you just wait until we cross the border into the next state!” But now we have 6 states. Then we got one crew leader fired.” (Victor, interview May 11, 2017.)

“We do a comprehensive assessment of performance in every area of the Code of Conduct, and this report ONLY goes to the participating grower and to the CIW. They must have BINDING plans (for corrections) and we must see a change by the next visit. Otherwise, they are WARNED, then DROPPED.” (Matt W.)

And yes, there have been cases of growers dropped from the program.

“Most standards are not upheld without consequences. But we are like consultants….

We can give them a BLUEPRINT of how they can fix (their problems), do risk prevention, and fix illegal situations.” (Judge Laura)

Further, there are not just punishments, there are also incentives to abide by the Fair Food Codes of Conduct:

“Growers get purchasing preference (with the Fair Food certification).

These (Fair Food) growers are now the “employers of choice.” Fair Food growers have LESS labor shortage.” (Judge Laura)

And finally:

“CONSEQUENCES are what make this work. After 6 seasons, we have resolved over 1700 complaints.”

(Judge Laura)

**VICTIM-ORIENTED**

Formerly, when authorities discovered forced labor (slavery), officers swept in and arrested everyone. Now, the enslaved workers are treated differently.

“(Before CIW and FFSC) ICE (Homeland Security) would have taken everyone to jail. Now, trafficking victims and witnesses can get work authorization” (Judge Laura). And until the authorization came through for these enslaved victims to work legally in the US, the FFSC (including Victor and others) put these victims in hotel rooms and stayed with them until the special work permits arrived.

“With one of the first calls to a (non-CIW) grower complaint line, the worker’s name was given to the grower. The grower grabbed the worker and FIRED him. Then (other workers) called OUR complaint line and in a few short weeks the grower had to apologize---apologize to ALL of us, to us and to the WORKERS (in public). (Judge Laura)

“Did it help that I was a judge (in dealing with complaints)? Yes. The process is more like ‘treatment court’ where former adversaries are getting together on the same side of the table….Half of the fight is letting people be heard….some might quarrel with WHAT I did, but not HOW I did it.”

Judge Laura

**ENSEMBLE LEADERSHIP STYLE**

**Ensemble** leadership includes four (4) distinguishing qualities (Rosile, Boje, and Nez, 2016): it is collectivist, relational, dynamic, and heterarchic.

are all drawn from indigenous cultures.

is characterized as heterarchic, which Rosile, Boje, and Nez describe as dynamic and multi-centered.

DM: In the audit cycle, at least once per year (or once per season?) we visit sites. There is a baseline audit for new growers or new standards or new systems.

We interview at least 50% of the workers, and some employ 1500 workers, plus management, etc.

If it is a small crew of 30, we talk to 25 (of them).

After interviews we transcribe our (hand-written field) notes.

We talk to them as they pick (get down on our knees sometimes) so we don’t interrupt their work.

I introduce myself and give them the (educational) booklet.

Vx: We (rotate) take turns answering the phone complaints, so those answering the phones have been in the field, and know the people and the business.

DM: In the management interviews, we go through each section of the code, even transportation and housing, (asking) “how do you understand the system for the code of conduct?”

DM: It could be a 3 or 4 hour management interview, especially early on.

MW: We would ask the manager, “from your understanding, what do you think we should see?”

MW: Our teams are assembled with diversity in mind--- growers and managers, supervisors and workers---so we construct our teams with that in mind. Teams are a minimum of 3 people, and (usually) range from 4 or 5 up to 8 or 10. Farms could have from 6 up to 800 workers.

We (FFSC) started with 6, but now have a staff of 15, of whom 6 are “Directors”. (Everyone is a leader.)

Each has a voice and takes ownership.

We work through problems with the growers, and usually it takes until the end of the third season to develop good relationships. (Judge Laura)

JL: Consumers must make this a requirement of conditions under which food is harvested. I think people will be willing to pay a small amount more for FREE tomatoes vs. slave tomatoes.

We did not find anyone working at the CIW or FFSC or SFA (Student Farmworker Alliance) for whom this work was “just a job.” Instead, when asked why the students who had done internships chose to stay with the CIW after college graduation, they admitted it was not for the admittedly-low pay. As one woman said: “We change lives.” Later, we discovered that those who work at the CIW offices get paid at the same rate as those who work in the fields.

marched in support of the CIW boycott of work at the CIW

As we were finishing our incredible evening with Judge Laura and 3 of her staff members, we stood up from the sidewalk dining table and were saying goodbyes and exchanging business cards and contact information. Suddenly Judge Laura stopped, and as if it was the most important point of the evening, she said:

“You have to care. You have to care deeply about the result. You have to care a lot to get results.”

**THE HOMESTEAD CASE**

JL: There was one forced labor case that happened in the Fair Food program.

It is a textbook case of how (well) this system works.

First, the supervisor involved was already listed on our web site as “Do not hire”, on the “No Hire” list.

In 2 weeks a worker called in a complaint.

In 1.5 days we had an investigation going on there.

In 2.5 weeks we met with the US attorney and served (documents) on the Homestead case.

So,

Feb 14 the call came in

Mar 3 arrests were being made, AND,

The victims were NOT taken into custody (as had been the practice),

But put in hotel rooms with us (Victor and others).

Mar 17 an indictment was filed, and sentencing was just this past January.

(This was VERY SPEEDY.)

We met them at the laundromat, there was a lot of FEAR because they LIVED with the perpetrator.

We passed out cards (and explained their rights).

A woman stood and said “I don’t want to wait - - I will speak now, and (the rest of you) can speak too!”

Formerly, ICE would have taken EVERYONE to jail.

NOW, trafficking victims and witnesses can get WORK AUTHORIZATION (in conjunction with VIDA, a non-profit for survivors of sexual violence and forced labor).

This is a VICTIM-CENTERED approach to human trafficking.

**THE FRENCH RESPONSE** “In February (2017), French Parliament adopted a new law…establishing a duty of vigilance for businesses, requiring them to monitor their company and supply chains for human rights and environmental protection violations.” ([www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/how-french-are-tackling-modern-slavery](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/how-french-are-tackling-modern-slavery) .

**WHAT WORKS**

Ensemble leadership is apparent in the CIW’s motto “Everyone is a leader.” Living up to this motto in daily practice is what makes the CIW approach of “worker-driven social responsibility” a lived experience and not just empty words. Once the workers have an active role in establishing and monitoring workplace standards, the next step is establishing significant consequences for violations. The CIW has accomplished this with more united action: violations by growers in the program result in the Participating Buyers (now including huge buyers like Wal-Mart and Taco Bell) refusing to buy from growers not in the Fair Food program or not maintaining Fair Food standards. This consequence has been effective in enforcing the Fair Food program’s standards, and virtually eliminating modern-day slavery in South Florida.

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| **Good/Bad Eval**  **Imposed by** | **Good/Bad Eval**  **Imposed Upon** | **Results in** | **Example** |
| SELF | SELF | Self-Empowerment | CIW emphasizes responsibility of workers to not abuse rights (breaks, etc.) |
| SELF | OTHERS | Power Over,  Win-lose personal attitudes | Wendy’s will not sign Fair Foods agreement, so CIW calls for boycott |
| OTHERS | SELF | Power Over,  Win-Lose social norms | Before the CIW, slavery existed |
| SELF & OTHERS | SELF & OTHERS | Power With,  Win-Win | With Fair Foods, AFF and CIW cooperate with grower/employers |

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| **Power Relations** | **Example** | **Social Result** |
| Self-Empowerment | CIW emphasizes balance of rights and responsibilities | Cooperation: fosters dignity and mutual respect |
| Us vs. Them, prejudice | Wendy’s will not sign Fair Foods agreement, so CIW calls for boycott | Controversy: each side seeks 3rd party allies (Mexico, consumers, etc) |
| Paternalistic or Oppressive Other | Before the CIW, slavery existed | Injustice, exploitation, oppression, limited opportunities |
| Power With | AFF and CIW have cooperative alliances with growers/employers | Win-Win, multi-voiced, co-created story |