



“We Are Not Tractors”

Banner, signed by members of the CIW, 1998

Created in response to an Immokalee tomato grower who said, “The tractor doesn’t tell a farmer how to run a farm.”

The taste of bitterness reminds us that we were once slaves; that slavery still exists. In Immokalee, Florida, I saw the evidence of the bitterness of slavery: I saw the chains in the Modern Slavery Museum organized by the CIW; I spoke with farmworkers who had gotten up at 4am every morning to wait for hours in a parking lot, hoping for a few hours of work, doubtful whether they’d ever get paid. Bitterness reminds us, and its sharp flavor can wake us up. In Immokalee, I saw the amazing action that the taste of bitterness can inspire: weekly meetings of workers to plan their own liberation; marches on foot, on bicycle, to protest at corporate headquarters; immigrant workers who lack all legal protections creating a powerful mechanism to stop the abuses they once faced. As we bless this maror, let us bless both awareness and awakeness—the knowledge of bitterness, and of the action it can inspire us to take.

- Rabbi Toba Spitzer,
Congregation Dorshei Tzedek,
Newton, MA

מרור Maror

As we eat bitter herbs, we reflect on the bitterness of slavery through the testimonies of survivors.

“When you’re there, [enslaved,] you feel like the world is ending. You feel absolutely horrible...Once you’re back here on the outside, it’s hard to explain. Everything’s different now. It was like coming out of the darkness into the light. Just imagine if you were reborn. That’s what it’s like.”

– Adam Garcia Orozco, farmworker

“I was so tired and did not know how I could continue working like this. But I did not say anything to anyone. I did not know how I could do what was expected...All the time I was crying. Even sometimes at night I could not sleep. I would cry so hard I would have a headache. I would dream and see my family. It was a very hard time.”

– Elsa, domestic worker
(*Life Interrupted*, p. 90, 92)

I remember when he lifted up his shirt and I saw that scar. It was the first time I had ever seen a scar like that—it ran about 8 inches in length down the side of his body. It was unbearable to see. I had worked with sex workers in Guatemala, some of whom had been sex trafficked, and with refugees from East Africa in Israel, some of whom had been sex or labor trafficked, but I had not encountered organ trafficking in a real way before. This young Eritrean teenager had somehow survived and had made it to Tel Aviv. His scar was thick and frightening. His kidney was gone. I could feel the trauma he had endured and it seeped into me. I couldn’t sleep for nights after that moment. This is a type of human trafficking we often forget and overlook, but it is real, it is happening throughout the world, it is inhumane, and it must be stopped.

- Maya Paley,
Director of Legislative and
Community Engagement,
National Council of Jewish
Women/Los Angeles