

“Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you ...”

An excerpt from the Irresistible Revolution, by Shane Claiborne

... One of the groups many of us in Philly have grown to admire, because they exemplify the gentle revolution, is the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. They are farm workers and day laborers who pick tomatoes for companies like Taco Bell (and Publix!). We've worn out some shoes together marching hundreds of miles in protest. One summer a few years back, the workers told us they were organizing a walk from their fields in Florida to the growers association in Orlando. As



usual, we joined them. On the back of a truck, a fourteen-foot Statue of Liberty led the way, only instead of a tablet, she held a bucket, and in place of the torch, she lifted up a tomato. Along the way, hundreds of pedestrians came by to voice their support, along with actors, musicians, politicians, and clergy. They made headlines in nearly every town we passed through. As we neared Orlando, public attention had reached a pinnacle, and the police told the workers they could no longer have the statue on the back of the truck. We were disappointed. But one of the workers grabbed me. “They said we cannot have the statue on the truck,” he said pensively, “so we will carry her.” He was serious. So each of us grabbed a corner and hoisted her up on our shoulders, and we began walking, taking turns. One of the mighty women who helped carry the statue whispered, “If Jesus can carry that cross, we can carry this statue.” And we did. Dripping with sweat, singing, and chanting, we carried her to the front doors of the growers association.

It was a sacred moment. The executives tried to ignore them. They issued a statement that “the tractors don’t come up to the farmer and tell him how to run the farm.” With tears in their eyes, these workers with calloused hands and leathery skin from long days in the sun-scorched fields cried out, as if to God, “We are not tractors. Tractors do not bleed and cry. Tractors do not have families and children. We are not machines; we are human beings.” It seemed to me the whisper of James was never as clear as it was on that day: “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you” (James 5:4–6).”