

## The Fair Trade Certified Coffee Campaign

### Why did Global Exchange decide to start a Fair Trade coffee campaign?

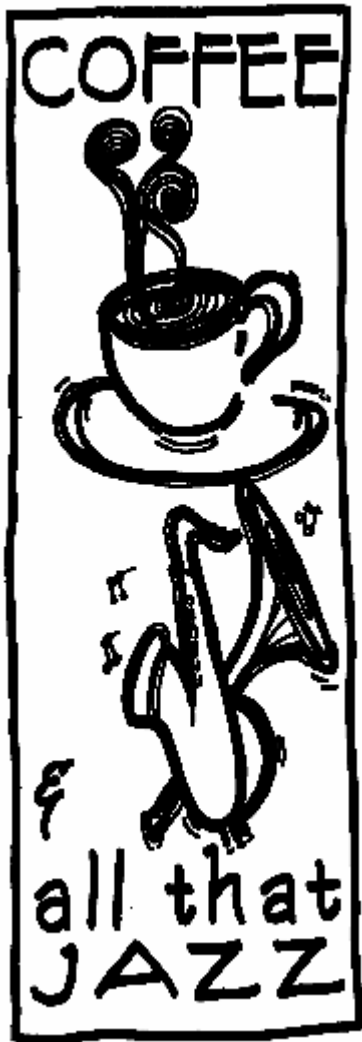
A: Because coffee is so widely traded and consumed, it has an immense impact on the economic well-being of people in poor countries. For the same reason, it also offers one of the most promising avenues for bringing about positive change. Global Exchange believes that as we criticize free trade and corporate globalization for its lack of democracy and exploitation of poor people around the world, we need to promote our own vision of a just global trade system based on economic justice. In our work against sweatshops, we have struggled for years with the need for a comprehensive system of monitoring of wages and factory conditions that doesn't yet exist for garments as it does for coffee. With the inception of TransFair USA, Fair Trade Coffee certification became the first commodity where an independent monitoring system could track and verify that Fair Trade criteria had been met. We have been involved for ten years in promoting Fair Trade through our craft stores in San Francisco and Berkeley. Recognizing an alternative to free trade in Fair Trade Certified coffee, Global Exchange initiated a campaign in the summer of 1999.

### What is the history of the Fair Trade coffee movement?

A: Global Exchange began spearheading a campaign to promote Fair Trade coffee in the summer of 1999. During the summer we focused our campaign on our local Bay Area. We organized a coalition of interested human rights, environmental, church, social justice, and student organizations that believed in the model of Fair Trade and wanted to help promote living wages for farmers. We outreached to the local press and generated stories about Fair Trade in the *Oakland Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Contra Costa Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*, and *San Jose Mercury News* about Fair Trade coffee. We helped to host Santiago Rivera, a farmer from San Francisco's Sister City of Estelí, Nicaragua, for an event with San Francisco Supervisor and living wage advocate Tom Ammiano. We worked with San Francisco, [Berkeley](#), and [Oakland](#) city councils to be the first governments in the country to offer Fair Trade Certified [purchasing restrictions](#).

We increased the retail outlets that offer Fair Trade Certified coffee from just 4 to over 100 in just a few months! Our volunteers set up informational tables at many local events, hosted speakers on Fair Trade coffee at local schools and churches, and brought awareness to the need to purchase Fair Trade to a critical mass of people in the Bay Area.

In the fall of 1999 we began sowing the seeds for our nationwide campaign focusing on helping community activists and college students coordinate Fair Trade coffee campaigns on their campuses. We now have a network of over [50 communities](#), predominantly colleges, that are organizing educational outreach and campaigning to promote Fair Trade coffee and purchasing restrictions locally. Students at schools including Ohio University, Portland State, University of Chicago, Tulane, and Columbia are working to get sweatshop coffee off their campuses and replace it with Fair Trade Certified coffee, and students at UC Davis, College of the Atlantic, and SUNY Binghamton have already been successful. United Students Against Sweatshops, the Student Alliance to Reform Corporations, and student environmental organizations have participated in Fair Trade Certified coffee activities on their campuses, identifying it as an important tool towards decorporatizing our universities and greening our campuses. In addition, we continue to work with churches, environmental groups, unions, and other social justice communities to promote Fair Trade for farmers. We have [contacts](#) in your city and an [Action Kit](#) full of tools to get started!



### What is the history of the Starbucks campaign?

A: In the spring of 2000 we turned our sights towards [Starbucks](#) with the plan of pressuring them to offer their customers the choice to buy Fair Trade coffee at all of their stores across the country. Starbucks is the largest retailer of specialty coffee, owning a fifth of all cafes nationwide. In November, 1999, Global Exchange approached then Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, and requested that Starbucks buy Fair Trade Certified coffee. We then organized several peaceful demonstrations promoting Fair Trade in front of Starbucks in Seattle that same month. Starbucks was initially very hesitant, alleging low bean quality and insufficient consumer demand. We then initiated a massive letter writing campaign involving citizens across the nation, writing as consumers of Starbucks demanding they carry Fair Trade coffee.

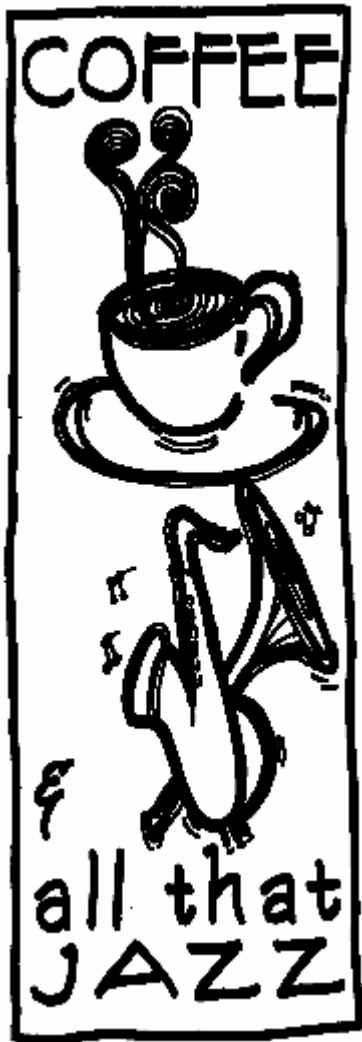
In February, 2000, an investigative report by ABC-affiliate KGO in San Francisco exposed child labor and incredibly low wages in plantations in Guatemala, some of which sell coffee to Starbucks. On February 4th we organized a local protest as a result. On February 14th we petitioned stockholders at their Annual General Meeting in Seattle to respond to consumer demand and fairness and offer Fair Trade Certified coffee. In a meeting we had that day with Starbucks officials, they stated that they would not yet commit to doing so. That week, Starbucks announced a one-time shipment of 75,000 pounds of Fair Trade coffee as a sign that they were aware of the demand. We responded that for a company the size of Starbucks, this represented a "Drop in the Cup," an average of about 30 pounds per store - and that the coffee was not certified! We quickly dismissed this move in the media as an obvious public relations ploy, because this tiny token amount is only enough for about 30 pounds per store!

We then circulated an Open Letter, signed by 84 student, environmental, church, and social justice organizations, asking Starbucks to pay farmers a living wage and offer them the choice to buy Fair Trade Certified coffee. We helped organize 30 demonstrations to be held on April 13 across the country at Starbucks shops, with a large base of activists committed to helping farmers earn a living wage. Over 500 concerned people faxed in letters to Starbucks from our website, and hundreds more sent in postcards asking the giant retailer to offer Fair Trade coffee.

Three days before the launch of our campaign on April 13, Starbucks capitulated to our demands and announced an agreement with TransFairUSA to begin offering Fair Trade Certified coffee at all of its stores nationwide with a launch date of October 4. They will also be developing educational materials including posters, brochures, packaging, and training for coffee bar workers, so millions of customers will have the chance to learn about the benefits of Fair Trade. This is a huge victory for farmers whose incomes will triple, as hundreds more farmers will be able to sell their coffee at Fair Trade prices. It is also an importance victory for the corporate accountability movement. Starbucks' quick capitulation in the face of nationwide protests illustrates that grassroots organizing and education can indeed bring about major results. Starbucks has agreed to offer the coffee in whole bean form only, and we will be pressuring them to offer it in brewed coffees and espresso drinks this fall when the beans are on the shelves. See our [news section](#) for more details of the history of the Starbucks campaign.

### What is your relationship with the Specialty Coffee Association of America?

A: From April 14-18, 2000, we attended the Specialty Coffee Association of America, titled "Quality, Sustainability, and Social Responsibility." Fair Trade and discussions of fairness and sustainability played a major role in the conference, held in San Francisco. After the conference, we have been working with the SCAA to develop a workplan for their newly created Fair Trade Working Group. We have identified key areas in which the trade association, in an historic move, can help to play a leadership role in promoting Fair Trade amongst its members, including officially endorsing Fair Trade Certification, educating its members through trade publications,



assisting in research needs, and helping to channel funding resources for product quality improvement to Fair Trade cooperatives.

**Is there enough consumer demand for Fair Trade coffee?**

A: According to the 1998 Cone/Roper benchmark study, 78% percent of consumers would rather purchase a product associated with a cause about which they believe. 54% say that they would pay more for a product that supports their cause. TransFair's 1997 consumer study revealed that 49% of specialty coffee drinkers surveyed said they would buy Fair Trade coffee. In the post-WTO climate, more and more people are demanding Fair Trade products. Most people in this country would rather buy a cup of coffee picked under fair trade conditions than sweatshop labor conditions.