

# Just Economic Opportunities

## **Objective**

To promote a healthy local economy and fair working conditions everywhere.

## **How Tos**

Many of the just economic opportunities will be found by attending to them in our request for proposals and contracts with vendors, exhibitors and venues.

## Research

- Identify and check with local or national migrant worker organizations and movements to ensure vendors are not a target of an ongoing boycott or campaign.
- Draft a labor and business checklist relevant to your community to use when soliciting bids and possible vendors and evaluate program and purchase options.

## Language in Requests for Proposals and Contract

- In request for proposal (RFP) and contract: Ask vendors and subcontractors to sign a statement attesting that they do not engage in or benefit from the use of child or slave labor or human trafficking.
- Develop contracts with vendors and subcontractors that allows United Methodist Women to cancel without penalty in case of an emerging labor dispute.
- RFPs require potential vendors to provide information about current union representation and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaints in past five years (who, what, when/if resolved and how resolved).
- RFPs ask for demographic information about management and rest of workforce, including racial/ethnic identity, sex, pay scale and employment category.
- If past or potential vendors are a target of a campaign or boycott, meet with vendor and share information on how The United Methodist Church and/or United Methodist Women understands just economic relations to exist.

## Education of Members and Care for Workers

- Make sure all United Methodist Women members understand the need to see their workers, express gratitude and tip the service workers including delivery persons, room cleaners and restaurant workers. Consider creating a small uniform United Methodist Women “calling card” for tipping room cleaners in hotels or even at restaurants for all your participants. It could say, “United Methodist Women is grateful for your service today.”



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## Helpful Resources

- Get a deeper understanding of how the economy works to benefit some and marginalize others from United Methodist Women partner organization United for a Fair Economy: [www.faireconomy.org](http://www.faireconomy.org).
- AFL-CIO national boycotts: [www.unionlabel.org/?zone=/unionactive/view\\_page.cfm&page=Boycott](http://www.unionlabel.org/?zone=/unionactive/view_page.cfm&page=Boycott).

### Food and farm conditions

- Coalition of Immokolee Workers Campaign for Fair Food: [ciw-online.org/campaign-for-fair-food](http://ciw-online.org/campaign-for-fair-food).
- National Farmworkers Ministry: [www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org).

### Hospitality Workers

- Hotel Workers Rising: [www.hotelworkersrising.org](http://www.hotelworkersrising.org)
- Hotels with Unions:  
[www.unionhotelguide.org](http://www.unionhotelguide.org)  
[www.iwj.org/resources/hospitality-workers-guide](http://www.iwj.org/resources/hospitality-workers-guide)

### Corporate Engagement: Companies The United Methodist Church is watching

- [www.gbophb.org/sri/engagements-and-resolutions](http://www.gbophb.org/sri/engagements-and-resolutions)

### Biblical and Faith resources for worker justice and campaigns

- [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)

## Fast Facts

Today, the top 1 percent of our society holds 24 percent of the total wealth in the country. This is the most intense concentration of wealth at the top of the ladder since 1929.

Blacks and Latinos have made limited progress in closing the unemployment gap over the past three decades. As of November 2013, the unemployment rate was 12.5 percent among blacks as compared to 8.7 percent for Latinos and 6.2 percent for whites.

29.1 percent: The percent of single-race American Indians and Alaska Natives that were in poverty in 2012, the highest rate of any race group. For the nation as a whole, the poverty rate was 15.9 percent.

In 2012, 27 percent of blacks and 26 percent of Latinos were living at or below the federal poverty line, compared to 10 percent of whites.

As of 2010, the median white household—the one at the center of the wealth distribution—had \$123,300 in net wealth compared to \$15,600 for blacks and \$15,000 for Latinos. This means that blacks held 13 cents of net wealth and Latinos held 12 cents of net wealth to every dollar whites held.

Asian-American wealth in 2010 was higher than the median net worth for households overall (\$68,529). Compared with other race or ethnic groups, Asian Americans had lower median household wealth than non-Hispanic whites (\$112,000).

\$35,310: The median household income of single-race American Indian and Alaska Native households in 2012. This compares with \$51,371 for the nation as a whole.

Looking at recent unemployment statistics, Asian Americans were somewhat less likely to be unemployed than the national average for the first quarter of 2012 (6 percent compared with 7 percent for workers ages 25 and older). However, the gap differs by educational attainment. Less educated Asian Americans, those with no college education, had lower unemployment than comparably educated workers overall.

Sources: 2012 American Community Survey, 2013 Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends, 2014 State of the Dream Report.

## **Glossary**

**Boycotts:** Boycotts offer groups and/or individuals the chance to exert economic pressure on companies. They are particularly appropriate when governments are unwilling or unable to introduce reforms. Boycotts can be a vitally important extension of our formal democracy. For more information, see Ethical Consumer: [www.ethicalconsumer.org/boycotts/aboutboycotts](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/boycotts/aboutboycotts).

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):** The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. It is also illegal to discriminate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. Most employers with at least 15 employees are covered by EEOC laws (20 employees in age discrimination cases). Most labor unions and employment agencies are also covered. The laws apply to all types of work situations, including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages and benefits.

**Human trafficking:** Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and is the second largest criminal industry in the world after drug trade. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines human trafficking as the recruiting, transporting and harboring of persons by use of threat, force or deception for the purpose of exploitation. Traffickers take advantage of vulnerable persons with false promises or physical abduction, forcing them into contract slavery, forced labor and sexual trafficking. (For more information see United Methodist Women Fact Sheet on

Human Trafficking: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-do/service-and-advocacy/mission-focus-issues/human-trafficking/fact-sheet](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-do/service-and-advocacy/mission-focus-issues/human-trafficking/fact-sheet)).

Union/Labor Movement: The labor movement in the United States was founded to ensure the social and political well-being of American workers. Historically, unions have fought to strengthen public policies that benefit all Americans, both unionized and non-unionized. Unions have fought to strengthen minimum wage laws, worker safety protections and public safety nets. We have unions to thank for the two-day weekend and the 40-hour workweek. More recently, unions have fought to strengthen minimum wage laws, worker safety protections and public safety nets. Since the 1980s, the presence and power of organized labor in the United States has sharply declined. Today, union members account for roughly 12 percent of the workforce, down from 20 percent in 1983. In the public sector, the unionization rate is significantly higher at 36 percent. Over half of all unionized workers today are public sector employees. As corporate power and influence have skyrocketed in recent years, unions have provided a powerful mechanism for voter turnout that keeps our democracy strong. Unions represent one of the few organized forces that provide a counterbalance to the influence of corporate money and power in our democracy. (Adapted from United for a Fair Economy: [faireconomy.org/issue/unions-and-democracy/about](http://faireconomy.org/issue/unions-and-democracy/about))

### **Policy Foundations**

*The Book of Discipline* “The Social Community” (§162) and “The Economic Community” (§163), the Social Principles.

*The Book of Resolutions* #3083 “Eradicating Abusive Child Labor,” #3281 “Welcoming the Migrant to the United States,” #3371 “A Charter for Racial Justice Policies in an Interdependent Global Community,” #3373 “Affirmative Action,” #3444 “The Status of Women,” #4011 “Guidelines for Initiating or Joining an Economic Boycott,” #4052 “Economic Justice for a New Millennium,” #4060 “Global Living Wage,” #4092 “Statement of Concern on Poverty,” #4135 “Rights of Workers,” #6021 “Church Supports Global Efforts to End Slavery,” #6023 “Abolition of Sex Trafficking.”