

April 14, 2021

Dear President Kent Fuchs

I am writing to you from Freedom United, an anti-slavery organization home to the world's largest anti-slavery community, to express our deep concern about University of Florida's contract with food services provider Aramark. The company has well-documented links to forced labor within prisons and we urge the University of Florida to terminate and not renew its partnership with Aramark.

Freedom United currently campaigns for all public and private actors – including universities – to divest from prisons, immigration detention centers, and associated contractors that are linked to forced labor and modern slavery.¹ To date, over 18,000 supporters have joined our campaign. Furthermore, we are partnered with the Coalition to Abolish Prison Slavery University of Florida and the entire coalition of student-led organizations to demand that the University of Florida does not renew its contract with Aramark.²

Together we are calling on the University of Florida to completely disassociate from the prison industrial complex, and to specify in upcoming contract negotiations for campus food service contractors, that the chosen vendor will not be engaged in any prison labor contracts, invest in, exploit, or utilize prison labor in any way.

We welcome your statement from June 2020 where you outlined the university's commitment to fight against racial inequality and injustice.³ We commend your step towards divesting from prison slavery as we are aware the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences severed all prison labor contracts in September 2020.⁴ Although these are necessary steps towards fully divesting from prison slavery, we are still calling on you to fully uphold your commitments by cutting your contract with Aramark.

Aramark, Alameda County, and Sheriff Gregory Ahern are currently being sued in federal court by eight former pre-trial and immigrant detainees of the Santa Rita Jail in California. The claims are severe; they allege forced labor, violation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and violation of a California law that requires private companies to pay prisoners fair wages. The plaintiffs were made to work for Aramark in the prison's kitchen, but none of them received any compensation from Aramark or Alameda County. The lawsuit argues that Aramark "receives an economic windfall" as a result of the uncompensated labor of prisoners confined in Santa Rita Jail.⁵

We are calling on all sectors to divest and cut contracts with abusive facilities and reform contracting in order to end forced labor in prisons and ensure that those who are incarcerated are

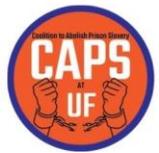
¹ <https://www.freedomunited.org/advocate/end-prison-slavery/>

² <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pqTielN7yIXiSi-3WVC9tShee6s7l3raTjFHUXqSD2s/edit>

³ <http://statements.ufl.edu/statements/2020/june/another-step-toward-positive-change-against-racism.html>

⁴ <https://www.alligator.org/article/2020/10/uf-s-institute-of-food-and-agricultural-sciences-to-end-use-of-prison-labor-after-push-from-activists>

⁵ <https://clearinghouse.net/detail.php?id=17339&search=>



paid fair wages. Many colleges have cut their contracts with Aramark in recent years – American University, Barnard College, Butler University, Barton College, The University of Chicago, The University of Houston, New York University, Pacific University, Central Michigan University, and Kent State University. Furthermore, both The American Friends Service Committee and Robasciotti & Philipson, an investment adviser focusing on social justice and ending systemic racism, specifically recommend divestment from Aramark due to the company’s links to the prison industrial complex.⁶⁷

For too long the United States’ public and private prison industry has gotten away with exploiting labor from those who are incarcerated and immigrant detainees — often earning massive profits in the process — under threat of penalty or punishment. We are seeing a system of exploitation that disproportionately impacts black and brown communities for cheap labor that in some cases is tantamount to modern slavery.

We urge you to cut your contract with Aramark and other facilities that are linked to forced labor and divest from modern slavery. In doing so, we encourage you to select a food services provider that is not invested in or linked to private and public prisons and immigration detention centers, or move towards self-operation of food services. Please note, we will update our supporters about our campaign and our call to action for University of Florida to divest on April 20, 2021.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me on joanna.ej@freedomunited.org or Herrana Addisu on herrana@freedomunited.org to discuss the campaign and your plans to terminate your relationship with Aramark.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Ewart-James
Executive Director
Freedom United

⁶ <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/aramark>

⁷ <https://robasciotti.com/stop-funding-systemic-racism/>