



**United Students for Fair Trade
National Convergence 2004
Santa Cruz, California
Feb. 13-16, 2004**

United Students for Fair Trade is a collaboration of students working towards economic justice through the promotion of Fair Trade products, principles and policies. The USFT National Convergence was the first of its type- student campaigners, industry representatives, and NGO's congregating in Santa Cruz, CA, to solidify the emerging network of student campaigners dedicated to Fair Trade.

Convergence aims:

- 1. Establish an independent, sustainable network of students advocating for Fair Trade products, principles, and policies;*
- 2. Establish the framework for strong regional networks for students to connect campus campaigns to;*
- 3. Establish the framework by which all figures in the Fair Trade movement (producers, students, community advocates, NGO's, industry, etc), can connect to one another.*

::: Student participation :::

There were over 120 students from 64 national and international colleges and universities and 7 high schools, including:

- Auburn University
- Bay Area High School
- Casa Grande High School
- College University of New Jersey
- Concordia University- St. Paul
- Cornell University
- County College of Morris
- Emerson College
- Georgetown University
- George Washington University
- Gettysburg College
- Harvard University
- Iowa State University
- Indiana University
- Ithaca High School
- Kyoto University, Japan
- Lafayette College
- Loyola Marymount University
- Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Lutheran Seminary
- Macalaster College
- Marlboro College
- Marquette University
- Michigan State University
- Monterrey Institute
- Monterrey University, Mexico
- New York University
- Northwestern University
- Ochanomizu University, Japan
- Poway High School
- Prescott College
- Simon Fraser University
- Sonoma State University
- St. Edwards University
- Renseselaer Polytechnic Institute
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
- University of British Columbia, Canada
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Los Angeles

- University of California, Santa Cruz
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University Dakar Bourguiba, Senegal
- University of Florida, Gainesville
- University of Massachusetts, Boston
- University of Minnesota
- University of Montana
- University of New Mexico
- University of Oregon
- University of San Francisco
- University of Texas
- University of Vermont
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin, Madison
- Ventura College
- Waseda University
- Wells College
- Whitman College
- Yale University

Of these students, Oxfam sent 10 CHANGE Leaders from the following universities:

- Georgetown University
- George Washington University
- Indiana University
- Loyola Marymount
- Michigan State University
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- St. Edwards University
- University of Florida, Gainesville
- Washington State University
- Wells College

The conference solidified United Student for Fair Trade's national (and burgeoning international) place in the national and global Fair Trade movement, and situated USFT as a strong and emerging force as a student movement. Out of the conference, seven domestic regional groups and one international regional group emerged, including the Northwest, West, Southwest, Midwest, Mid-atlantic, Southeast, Northeast, and international region. Each region now has one designated point person to coordinate regional activities within USFT.

::: Producer presence :::

Central to the Convergence was the presence of Fair Trade coffee and crafts producers from the Americas, including Oxfam partner Ileana Cordon of Crecer (Guatemala), Nicaraguan coffee cooperative members Hamilton Rivera from Ceocafen and Fatima Espinoza from Soppexca who delivered the keynote speech of the convergence, and Victor Mendez and Roberto Jimenez from Coopabuena cooperative in Costa Rica. This ongoing student-producer dialogue formed the backbone of the student experience.

::: Industry Participation :::

Many forerunners in the Fair Trade industry were on hand to offer advice and insight to student organizers, run interactive workshops, and offer a diversity

of industry perspectives. These included Equal Exchange (MA), Peace Coffee (MN), Alterra Coffee Company (WI), Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (VT), Thanksgiving Coffee Company (CA) and Santa Cruz Coffee Roasters (CA).

::: NGO support :::

Various organizations provided students with a wealth and depth of Fair Trade, coffee campaigning, and organizing experience, including Oxfam America, Global Exchange, Fair Trade Resource Network, Transfair USA, Lutheran World Relief/ Interfaith Fair Trade Initiative, Mexico Solidarity Network, Community and Agroecology Network, WAGES, The Ruckus Society, the Beehive Collective, Pachamama World, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Student Farmworker Alliance, and the Washington Fair Trade Apple Initiative.

::International Student Participation::

The presence of students from Japan, Mexico, Canada, and Senegal opened the possibility for internationalizing USFT's scope and building strong relationships for future collaboration. The possibility of national conferences in Mexico and Japan were discussed as well as ideas for developing concrete international participation and links with the Student conference being organized in Senegal for January, 2005.

::: Weekend Highlights :::

- Congressman Sam Farr of Santa Cruz, CA, came to speak with USFT conference organizers on Friday, Feb 13th. In an hour long conversation, Farr expressed his support for Fair Trade, the student movement, and established himself as the 'Fair Trade Warrior' of the student movement!
- Student- producer interchange was maximized throughout the weekend. Students heard from small coffee producers Hamilton Rivera (Ceocafen) and Fatima Espinoza (Sopexxca) from Nicaragua as keynote speakers; four simultaneous student-producer dialogue sessions were held; and the Chiapas Media project, Mexico Solidarity Network and Crecer presented a session on Fair Trade crafts;
- Students participated in a dialogue session with many of the founders of the Fair Trade movement in the U.S. called 'Scaling Up without Selling Out.' This conversation included input from Paul Rice, founder of Transfair USA, and students shared critical questions and thoughts about the expansion and mainstreaming of Fair Trade in the U.S. - simultaneously a Fair Trade 101 workshop was held for students new to Fair Trade;
- Regional breakout sessions occurred throughout the weekend, and a solid regional framework for rooting Fair Trade campaigns in local movements and organizations has begun to emerge;
- Workshop sessions included Fair Trade and campus organizing, community organizing, immigration, Fair Trade direct, faith outreach,

- high school organizing, trade justice, domestic Fair Trade initiatives, anti-oppression work, domestic farmworker solidarity, and many others;
- An afternoon for open-space sessions was held in which students had the opportunity to plan and run their own workshops on topics that weren't already offered during the convergence;
 - The presence of students from Japan, Mexico, Canada, and Senegal was exciting and gave a true scope of the breadth of student activism. The Oxfam West Africa Regional office sent one student representative, Bertrant Olliang, to come and learn how the student movement is forming here in the US. Bertrant participated in an Oxfam Make Trade Fair student conference last year, and is planning a similar regional meeting in Senegal for January 2005;
 - The convergence was opened up to the Santa Cruz community with a Fair Trade Town Hall presentation, which included eight NGO and producer panelists, and a Fair Trade Fusion event with live music and opportunities for organizations to table and celebrate!

::: Oxfam participation at the convergence :::

Oxfam staff provided essential support before, during, and after the convergence.

- Xavier Benavides provided the link to CHANGE leader participation at the convergence, as well as essential facilitation and conference workshop skills stemming from extensive experience organizing student conferences;
- Michelle Dixon presented three workshops, the Trade Justice Movement, CAFTA organizing and building national student alliances, which provided the essential link to Make Trade Fair and the Student Trade Justice Coalition. As a result of these workshops, students interested in campaigning around CAFTA this spring strategized together and developed a plan for regional CAFTA trainings which will take place in the next several months.
- Simon Billenness provided vital support to questions surrounding corporate campaigning and USFT, as well as a cohesive strategy for USFT to launch the Food Service Providers Initiative, aimed at engaging with Sodexo, Aramark, and Chartwells, to increase availability of Fair Trade to campus accounts;
- Shayna Harris has worked in collaboration with USFT since its initiation. She provided advice and steered the formulation of the conference agenda, organizational, industry, and student participants. Shayna facilitated the Midwest regional breakout session throughout the weekend, facilitated student-producer dialogue with Crecer, and led two workshop sessions, Fair Trade 101 workshop, and Campus to Community organizing. She also spoke on the Fair Trade Townhall panel on Sunday night.

What is Oxfam's role within USFT?

Prior to and since the launch of the coffee campaign in September 2002, Oxfam America has been working with student groups raise awareness of the international coffee crisis and encourage consumer and political action to address the coffee crisis. Through the Oxfam America CHANGE Initiative and Fair Trade Coffee Trainings, Oxfam's Fair Trade Coffee Organizer has directly trained 269 students from 225 college campuses specifically on the issue of coffee and fair trade. Oxfam has held four Fair Trade Coffee Student Organizer trainings, in Washington DC (winter 2002), Chicago (fall 2002), Seattle (winter 2003), and New Orleans (winter 2003).

USFT was originally envisioned at the summer 2002 Oxfam America CHANGE training. Its evolution has been a dynamic interplay of many events, factors, and interests. During the fall semester of 2002, students at Georgetown University and George Washington University began to tap into existing student social and environmental justice networks, including the Oxfam CHANGE listserv, as students began merging various efforts towards a united student front. In the fall of 2002 the Oxfam Fair Trade Coffee Organizer began to work very closely the emerging USFT network. USFT was formally launched at the Seattle Fair Trade Coffee training, where a motivated group of students came together to move the group forward, participating in outreach & key activities at the SCAA 2003 conference.

Oxfam America housed and funded two USFT interns this summer, an NYU student and a Cornell University student. Over the course of an 8 week period they were able to lay out a formative vision for the group, including a 3-day, Oxfam-funded Vision, Mission, and Values Summit, and groundwork was laid for the National USFT Convergence.

The Oxfam America Fair Trade Coffee Organizer continues to maintain close, daily contact with various USFT national and regional organizers, and supports member campuses in planning and trouble-shooting on campus.

Post-conference follow up: Opportunities and Challenges

The establishment of USFT as an independent student organization presents some challenges and incredible opportunities for the Fair Trade movement and Oxfam. Four are highlighted below.

Among the challenges:

1. How can Oxfam maintain close and consistent contact with USFT as an organization, establishing a clear and institutionalized relationship, while recognizing that USFT is an independent student organization;
2. How can Oxfam harmonize its work supporting USFT and its efforts to develop an Oxfam Student Coalition and/or Student Trade Justice Coalition;
3. What type of support will Oxfam continue to provide to USFT in the future;

4. How to measure the impact of Oxfam-supported student campaign work in the field, the reach of the coffee campaign, and those who are exposed to Oxfam issues and Make Trade Fair due to this type of student support.

Opportunities are numerous:

1. The regional structure of USFT allows for targeted and measured engagement with USFT organizers in various regions. USFT is looking to Oxfam for advice and vision in campaigning, which can be closely aligned with greater coffee campaign and regional coffee program goals;
2. Oxfam is in a unique position to reflect the reality of producers on the ground, while linking this reality to greater structural issues of trade. Students will continue to look to Oxfam as an authority on development issues- we should strive to keep up with the latest, both in our messaging and on our website, and tie these coffee messages into the larger trade campaign;
3. Student organizers consistently come to us for Oxfam organizing materials for campaigns, both in hard copy and on the web. As we maintain the most relevant and up to date materials on our site, we should strive to create a unique set of materials that sets Oxfam apart;
4. Oxfam can provide USFT with invaluable links to other organizations and supporters to help build the movement, their organization and specific campaigns.

Another key question to address is the role of Oxfam constituency building in the process of working in alliance with national organizations.

Follow-up steps include:

- Supporting USFT's spring regional meetings and participation in Earth Day (April 22) and World Fair Trade Fay (May 8) activities to increase awareness of Fair Trade and include more students in the USFT network;
- Aiding in the planning of fall 2004 USFT regional conferences;
- Helping USFT research future funding sources;
- Providing strategic direction in USFT national campaigns and initiatives, including corporate and government;
- Offering current and fresh information to students regarding the work of our coffee partners on the ground and policy work surrounding the coffee crisis;
- Materials surrounding the coffee campaign- Make Trade Fair link, or Fair Trade and Trade Justice link;
- Facilitating or supporting the development of student leadership through student trips to origin.