



## Hospitality and Human Dignity

**T**he Prophet Isaiah suggests that those who build houses should be able to live in them. And those who pick the food should be able to eat the food (Isaiah 65:20-22). Indeed, those who clean hotel rooms should be able to afford a room of their own to clean and sleep in. The prophetic principle is clear: Those who labor should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Hotel workers provide comfort for the stranger against enormous odds in the workplace, including increasing workloads, understaffing, reprisal when they organize, and lack of health coverage. Sometimes immigrant workers have their own immigration status used against them, even as they serve the needs of foreign travelers.

In most hotels, *housekeepers clean 15 or more rooms per day*. Housekeepers now have one of the highest injury rates in the service industry (according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

The hotel industry is rapidly becoming a consolidated, international, and highly profitable business, frequently distanced from the hotel workers employed. Hotel workers are:

- Not being paid a living wage.
- Facing discrimination due to their immigration status.
- Working more and more due to understaffing.
- Not getting adequate health care benefits.
- Experiencing retaliation for attempting to organize.

The hotel workers union, UNITE HERE, has successfully lined up contract expiration dates in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Toronto. Workers in San Francisco have been in negotiations for nearly two years. This means there is potential for 60,000 hotel workers across the U.S. to stand up for their rights in the workplace and win real improvements in the Fall of 2006.

### What you can do

As members of the religious community, it is time to take the first step in identifying ways that we can write the vision for God's Justice.

1. **Pray for the workers.** *That they will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. (Isaiah 65:22)*
2. **Sign the Hospitality and dignity statement.** Interfaith Worker Justice, the nation's largest faith-based movement to organize, educate, and mobilize the religious community in support of workers, has been coordinating a national campaign to increase awareness within the religious community. (See [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).) Sign on your support and tell others!
3. **Support workers in any labor disputes arising this fall.** Think about any upcoming religious conferences or conventions, bar/bat mitzvahs, or weddings. Ask questions about how the workers are treated. Talk to hotel management about ways in which your faith calls you to live out righteousness.