

Teaneck International Film Festival

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fair Trade Film Explores the Coffee Industry at the Teaneck International Film Festival

TEANECK, NJ (November 21, 2010) -- More than 50 local citizens gathered at David, Saperstein, and Salomon Law Firm to discuss the corrosive business practices employed by some of the world's largest coffee producers explored in the film "Black Gold," a feature entry in this year's Teaneck International Film Festival. Fair Trade Teaneck Committee members Jaqueline Kates, Dennis Klein, Scott Leeder, and Zulema Suarez constituted the panel following the film to assert local consumers' coffee purchasing options.

As the film made clear, multinational coffee companies now dominate an industry worth over \$80 billion, making coffee the most valuable trading commodity in the world after oil. Few consumers are aware, however, how low farmers and producers in the developing world are paid. As a result, laborers in countries like Ethiopia become dependent on international aid, preventing them from opportunities for economic growth and productive control.

In the panel that followed, Fair Trade Teaneck members restated Teaneck's recent achievement as our nation's 21st Fair Trade Town - an accomplishment, according to Klein, who chairs the committee, that brands Teaneck as a socially and globally aware business zone. Leeder asserted that consumers can elect to purchase Fair Trade certified coffee and other products, including his own line of apparel manufactured by his company Tompkins Point Apparel, in order to reward producers and farmers who manage their own cooperatives, observe sustainable farming practices, and commit to abolishing child slave labor.

In response to several questions from the audience about the higher price for Fair Trade products, Kates asserted that prices are competitive and will match other prices the more consumers demand these products. "Besides," she added, "knowing exactly what we are buying, it is worth the price." Suarez, who represents Grace Lutheran Church on the Fair Trade Teaneck Steering Committee, observed that Fair Trade projects exactly the right message for consumers who want to make a difference. "It is aligned with the social justice mission of my social work profession and my Christian values."

Reflecting this year's Teaneck International Film Festival theme, "Activism: Making Change," panelists offered ideas for steps that the spirited audience can take in promoting the local Fair Trade campaign. These include inquiries at stores about Fair Trade products, the dissemination of information about Fair Trade, the promotion of Fair Trade products in local mosques, synagogues, and churches, and the decision to join the Steering Committee. For more information, email info@fairtradeteaneck.org and visit www.fairtradeteaneck.org.

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