

Zumi's commitment to Fair Trade

Thursday, July 14, 2005

Zumi's Café is committed to the Fair-Trade movement. At his shop on Market Street, Umesh Bhujy explains his commitment in a one-page flyer that customers can read. The text follows.

"Social and environmental responsibilities are at the root of the Fair-Trade coffee movement. Consumers who participate in Fair Trade are acknowledging that they are responsible not just for their own small part of the planet, but for the products they consume from throughout the world and the individual workers who help to bring them to this country. Coffee is the second largest imported product in the United States, only surpassed by the import of crude oil. Americans drink one-fifth of the world's coffee. It is in a unique position to shape the ethical and economic forces that drive the world coffee market.

"Zumi's Cafe in Ipswich, owned by Nepal native Umesh Bhujy, is a strong supporter of the Fair-Trade movement, selling only shade-grown Arabica coffee beans that bear the Fair-Trade label. The organic coffee beans are produced by small cooperatives of coffee bean growers who are paid a living wage while providing consumers with fresh, high quality coffee beans.

"Fair Trade is a socially responsible way of participating in the world economy. Fair-Trade organizations deal directly with farmers, encouraging sustainable development. The cycle that is created is one in which individual farmers and workers can begin to compete in the world market as equals with the buyers of their goods, replenish their own resources, and invest in their communities.

"The countries that produce coffee beans are among the world's poorest, often forced by market conditions to sell their crops at rock-bottom prices to rich multinational corporations. By eliminating those corporations that pay farmers and their workers just pennies a day only to reap vast profits on their labor, the farmers can earn a living wage and the coffee consumers buy costs no more than any other specialty coffee, yet is guaranteed to be organic and shade-grown.

"Those coffee workers who cannot participate in Fair Trade are captive to the vagaries of supply and demand. As a response to a greater demand for coffee in the 1950s, growers became impatient with the length of time it took for Arabica trees - the traditional source of high quality coffee beans - to mature. They turned instead to Robusta trees, which can grow on flat, sunny land and mature in just two years. In contrast, Arabica trees need shade and at least four years to mature. The result: a market flooded with cheap coffee beans that in recent years has driven workers' wages so low that many have ended up living in poverty.

"Fair Trade is, essentially, an attempt to change how we think about the world's economy. We need to care about both the quality of products and the process and people who produce them. Just because we can buy cheap coffee, does not mean we should spend our dollars that way.

"Fair Trade does not focus, however, only on economic issues. An integral part of the movement is helping small coffee bean growers to farm in an environmentally healthy and sustainable manner using organic farming methods - forgoing the use of pesticides and herbicides to protect ecosystems and wildlife.

"The community impact of Fair Trade is just as strong. By paying farmers a decent wage, those workers can begin to build up the resources to invest in their own farms and communities - improving irrigation, planting and other farming techniques, building health clinics and schools. Fair Trade helps to create a positive cycle of independent community action: thriving farms, thriving families, and thriving communities - and as an end result, a healthier global community."

Social Justice and Fair Trade Movement

www.zumis.com Page 1 7/11/2005