

**UNITE HERE'S REQUEST THAT THE URJ, CCAR, AND THE RAC SUPPORT
A BOYCOTT OF ALL HYATT HOTELS AND CANCEL ANY EVENTS
SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN HYATT HOTELS**

UNITE HERE, a labor union representing hotel workers, has requested that in connection with a labor dispute it has with the Hyatt Corporation, the URJ and the RAC support a global boycott of all Hyatt hotels and terminate signed contracts for any events scheduled to take place at Hyatt hotels. The URJ and the RAC have several such contracts at Hyatt hotels for the 2013 Consultation on Conscience, some of the 2012-13 and 2013-14 L'Taken Social Justice Seminars, and one of the hotels at the 2013 URJ Biennial. The URJ and the RAC have carefully considered this request, including a lengthy review undertaken by our national Commission on Social Action at its meeting on October 15. The URJ Oversight Committee has concluded not to take the actions requested by UNITE HERE but to look for ways other than canceling these existing contracts to support hotel workers (Hyatt or otherwise) in situations where their rights are thwarted and legitimate grievances are not addressed.

The purpose of this memorandum is to outline the pertinent background facts and our reasons for not taking the requested action.

We start with the proposition that the Reform Movement has a long history of support for the labor movement, and historic ties with many of the unions that merged into UNITE HERE (which included the historic Jewish garment trade unions). The issue of treatment of hotel workers is one that has long been an important social justice concern in our Movement. Many of

our rabbis and lay activists have been at the forefront of efforts to provide greater rights and protections for hotel workers, and we are proud of those efforts.

We fully recognize the difficult working conditions affecting many hotel workers and support the efforts of UNITE HERE to organize hotel workers to fight for better working conditions. Indeed, as part of our long-standing support for UNITE HERE and hotel workers, we were a founding partner in forming INMEX (Information Meeting Exchange), a system established by UNITE HERE to help non-profits avoid entering into contracts with hotels involved in labor disputes. As such, we check INMEX before entering into a hotel contract and, if INMEX shows that a hotel we are considering doing business with has an existing labor dispute, we will not sign a contract with that hotel – and we will let them know why.

In considering the issue of what action the URJ/RAC should take with respect to cancelling existing hotel contracts in connection with the global boycott request, several facts are critical for everyone to be aware of.

- The contracts in question were entered into one to three years before the announcement of the Hyatt boycott by UNITE HERE.
- Prior to entering into the contracts, the URJ/RAC followed exactly the process UNITE HERE asked of groups like ours and checked each specific hotel on INMEX and saw that there were no labor disputes involving the Hyatt hotels in question. And none of the hotels involved in the URJ programs are involved, at this time, in specific labor disputes.

- Following that check, the URJ/RAC entered into the contracts. As is customary in the hotel industry, each contract contains various guarantees by the URJ/RAC and penalties to be paid by the URJ/RAC in the event of cancellation. The total contractual penalties for cancelling all our Hyatt conferences is \$450,000. There would be significant additional costs in finding new locations this close to the conventions and conferences.
- While the act of breaking a contract would provide visible support to the UNITE HERE's efforts, it should be kept in mind that none of the substantial money involved will go to the labor union or the workers, but to the Hyatt hotels involved.

On July 23, 2012 -- long after the URJ/RAC had entered into the contracts in question -- UNITE HERE announced a global boycott of all Hyatt hotels in connection with its labor dispute with Hyatt. It requested that supporters not only desist from signing new contracts but break existing contracts and find other sites for conferences. Following that announcement, the URJ/RAC began consideration of what impact this announcement had on its events scheduled at Hyatt hotels. When a note from some of our UNITE HERE supporters was posted on HUCALUM asking to write us urging us to cancel the scheduled events at Hyatt hotels, we received some 20 such notes (and a few arguing the other side) all of which were shared with the CSA and the URJ Oversight Committee. Tom Snyder, the Chief of Staff of UNITE HERE, together with several Hyatt workers, participated in the meeting of our Commission on Social Action on October 15. At that meeting, Mr. Snyder told our Commission that while he recognized that the UNITE HERE global boycott request had placed the URJ/RAC in a very difficult position given our existing contracts, he requested that we use our "best efforts" to see if we could get out of the

contracts in issue in order to support the boycott. The CSA heard as well from high ranking officials from the Hyatt Corp.

As the CSA and the OC debated these issues, it became clear that there were countervailing moral issues that needed to be weighed as well:

1. First, the moral issue before the URJ/RAC is not simply one of supporting a boycott request from a long-time ally. The URJ/RAC entered into the contracts in issue in good faith, long before the announcement of any boycott AND only after complying with the INMEX procedures assuring that UNITE HERE had not identified any specific labor disputes at the hotels with which the URJ/RAC intended to do business.
2. Second, because of the moral complexity of the broad reach of boycotts, affecting many stakeholders who have no involvement in the disputes, the URJ/RAC has participated in boycotts only in certain exceptional circumstances. Our process requires detailed investigation, meetings with as many stakeholders as possible, hearing and considering arguments on all sides, and going through the often arduous process of trying to validate the claims made by the various parties. In that context, our support e.g. for the grape and lettuce boycotts, JP Stevens boycott and the South African anti-apartheid boycott were a source of pride for us. But due to this process, our support for boycotts is the exception and not the rule.

3. Third, the URJ/RAC has a fiduciary responsibility to the congregations and donors who have entrusted their funds to us. There can be little doubt that cancellation of one or more of the contracts in issue will involve cost -- and potentially very significant costs -- to the URJ/RAC both in terms of penalties which may have to be paid and the additional costs of securing alternative space (assuming space can be found). We must weigh the impact of how incurring these penalties would further the cause of workers' rights against the benefit this money will bring when used for other vital work of our Movement -- social justice and otherwise. Obviously at a time of enormous fiscal constraints on our congregations and our Movement, incurring costs in the form of penalties to pay Hyatt, which will divert funds from other vital programs, raises their own set of moral questions.

Based on all of these considerations, the URJ Oversight Committee has decided not to seek to move the events in question from Hyatt hotels. We respect those who disagree with us. For those who do disagree, let us point out that no one has to stay at a Hyatt to participate in our conferences. We hope they will join us in education programs on the situation of workers to be held at the conferences, showing our support for hotel workers, including those at Hyatt.