

## **Baristas at Pittsburgh Cafe Chain The Coffee Tree Roasters Speak Out Against Retaliation after Forming Union**

*Following Request from Baristas to Recognize their Union, Coffee Tree  
Unjustly Fires Worker in Retaliation for Activism Two Days Before  
Christmas*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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PITTSBURGH, PA – On Wednesday, December 22nd, the employees at Coffee Tree Roasters announced their intent to form a union with United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1776. The following day, the company fired Liam Tinker, who spoke in a video created by the Coffee Tree workers announcing their decision to join together and form a union. UFCW Local 1776 has filed charges of Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB.)

**Liam Tinker, Fired Barista at Coffee Tree Squirrel Hill:** “I was fired by Coffee Tree in the lead up to Christmas in retaliation for my support of the union. Talking to my fellow Coffee Tree baristas, there is no past precedent of immediate discharge under these circumstances. It’s disheartening to see such immediate and severe retribution against me and the Coffee Tree Union, but retaliation will just strengthen our resolve. This is yet another example of why we are forming a union to fight for job security, better working conditions, and respect from company ownership.”

**Wendell Young, IV President UFCW Local 1776:** “While we’re very disappointed that Coffee Tree management has decided to attack their workers instead of working with them to bargain, we know that these workers have the courage to stand up against bullying and retaliation. We’ve filed charges with the NLRB on behalf of the Coffee Tree workers and continue to work with them as they prepare for their union election.”

Coffee Tree baristas started conversations with the UFCW over the summer after initial discussions about wage transparency, electronic tips, and COVID-19 safety measures. Over the last six months, baristas from all five locations held discussions about pay and working conditions, and determined that the best way to pursue improvements was by forming a union and negotiating a collective bargaining agreement.

By disclosing their wages, Coffee Tree baristas learned that the company was attempting to hide wage discrepancies. For instance, baristas at the Shadyside location received a raise to increase employee retention, but were told to keep it secret from other locations. Baristas at this location were also given a \$1 premium for closing shifts at the same time the company took that benefit away from other stores.

**Riley Davis, Barista at Coffee Tree Mt. Lebanon:** “We’re forming a union to create a better environment for our customers and for us as workers. We feel we deserve electronic tips, guaranteed meal and rest breaks, paid sick time, and open communication with management. Coffee Tree customers are the reason we come to work every day--they make our work and community enjoyable.”

**Jordy Vargas, Barista at Coffee Tree Shadyside:** “Despite the hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic, the joy that we have brought to the customers at Coffee Tree has inspired us to continue working harder. We would like the company to recognize that through fair compensation and benefits so that we have the resources to continue giving back to our community.”

### ***Background***

The Coffee Tree Roasters (“Coffee Tree”) is a local coffee chain with five locations throughout the Greater Pittsburgh Area, along with a roastery and wholesale division.

*Serving workers in the grocery, retail, food manufacturing, health care and medical cannabis industries throughout Pennsylvania, the Ohio Valley and Hudson Valley, UFCW Local 1776 is proud to be a voice for the 35,000 workers we represent.*

