



Advocacy Groups to Protest Whole Foods 365 Opening in LA:

New York Times reports CEO link to Spiritual Leader "Trailed by a Troubled Past"

COMMENTS:

Jo-Ellen Pozner, **faculty, U.C. Berkeley Haas School of Business:**

“My take on this situation, in a nutshell, is that corporate leaders are showing a real lack of judgment in endorsing somebody with a tainted reputation of this particular sort. Not only does it show a disregard for important groups of stakeholders, it reveals a bit of hubris and tone-deafness. I think these sorts of associations are bad publicity, and reveal a blind spot which makes me question managerial judgment.”

Brad Hecht, **Vice President and Chief Research Officer, Reputation Institute:**

“As the founder of, primary spokesman for, and emotional leader of Whole Foods Market, John Mackey has a responsibility to immediately and directly address this issue. Whether he is willing to admit it or not, Mackey’s personal actions and associations will have a direct impact on the reputation of Whole Foods Market, and therefore the willingness of customers to support the company he leads.”

Peter Laughter, **co-chair, New York City Chapter, Conscious Capitalism, Inc.:**

“I believe that Marc Gafni’s admitted sexual liaison with a 13-year-old girl is reprehensible. Although Gafni has no connection to Conscious Capitalism, as a volunteer in the community, I am discouraged by John Mackey’s affiliation with Gafni’s organization. It is my hope that John reconsider this stance as he is a respected and representative thought leader in the Conscious Capitalism movement.”

Business Ethics Magazine, **Spotlight on Whole Foods CEO’s Ties to ‘Spiritual Leader with Troubled Past’:**

“If WFM’s board accepts that there is a firewall protecting the company from adverse attention in Mackey’s relationship with Gafni, as well as that the relationship is ‘in the company’s best interests,’ they shoulder accountability to stakeholders if they are wrong.”

Michael Messner, **Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, University of Southern California, and co-author of *Some Men: Feminist Allies and the Movement to End Violence Against Women***

“There is a growing chorus of younger men today who denounce sexual violence against women. But voiced opinions are one thing, and actions yet another. Too often still, when men’s vested interests are at stake—be they in the corporate board room, the frat house or the locker room—otherwise ‘good men’ maintain a culture of silence that helps to perpetuate violence against women.”

Cary Krosinsky, **Lecturer, Yale University:**

“I think in a case like this, it should be the obligation of all investors to hold the companies they own to a minimum standard behavior.”

Nonprofit Quarterly, **The Whole Mess at Whole Foods:**

“Just like the hypocrisy of Bill Cosby’s moralizing about black respectability and Jared Fogle’s trying to help childhood obesity, Marc Gafni’s views and new age spirituality look very much like an attempt to overshadow the pain he has caused by letting the world know what a ‘profoundly good person’ he is. John Mackey is compounding this hypocrisy and bringing Whole Foods with him.”

Edward L. Queen, **Director, Ethics and Servant Leadership Program, Center for Ethics, Emory University:**

“I do think the CEO of Whole Foods has managed this horribly. He hasn’t demonstrated publicly the deep thoughtfulness of response these allegations warrant. There is a complete denial of human agency and responsibility.”

James Abruzzo, **Co-director, Institute for Ethical Leadership, Rutgers Business School:**

“Sometimes the appearance of impropriety is itself improper. As a person whose name, ideals and personal mission contribute to the brand value of a public company, Mackey’s responsibility to Whole Foods’ shareholders should outweigh any personal predilections.”

Sreedhari Desai, **faculty, University of North Carolina, Kenan-Flagler Business School:**

“We expect our leaders to personify their organizations’ values and when their behavior strikes a discordant note, we expect answers. I find it hard to believe that John Mackey isn’t concerned about this issue, but he needs to find a way to demonstrate his values in this arena, especially given the public’s growing awareness of the importance of speaking up.”

James McRitchie, **Publisher, CorpGov.net:**

“Mr. Mackey has a fiduciary duty to WFM shareholders. His affiliation with Gafni and the center certainly put the reputation and value of WFM at risk.”

The Scripps Voice, **Whole Foods Fails Abuse Survivors:**

“Both Mackey’s actions and words up to this point have illustrated his blatant disregard for the safety and well being of Gafni’s victims. His notion of exclusive personal acquaintanceship holds very little truth and illustrates his calculated attempt to distance himself as one of Gafni’s business partners.”

Myka N. Held, Esq., **Staff Attorney, SurvJustice:**

“Given the dismal rates of prosecution of rapists, and the fact that even rapists who are prosecuted are not always convicted or appropriately punished, we cannot use the wide-spread failure of the criminal justice system as an excuse to let offenders off the hook. Marc Gafni has publicly admitted to having sex with a 13 year old girl while he was an adult. His attempts to shift blame to his young victim, stating that she was “14 going on 35” are despicable and show both his lack of remorse for his crime and his inability to recognize the seriousness of his crime. For these reasons alone it is important for us as a society to hold him accountable, and part of the mechanisms for doing so require us to demand that his powerful friends end their support.”

Melissa Agnes, **President and co-founder Agnes + Day, a crisis management firm:**

“So with a disgraceful statement directly from the alleged offender, and with news articles affiliating the Whole Foods name with this scandal, along with a petition pleading with the organization to sever their ties with Gafni, what was Whole Foods to

do? Organizations need to start waking up to the realities of today. The world has changed and the longer they wait to adapt, the worse it is for their business.”

David Clohessy, Executive Director of SNAP, made this statement in a separate press release issued by SNAP:

“We hope it’s true that CEO Mackey’s distancing himself from Gafni. If so, however, we disagree with the public relations staffer who claims ‘there’s nothing else to say on this matter.’ Mackey should apologize for his callousness and publicly announce his resignation from the board. And since Mackey’s involvement in Gafni’s center has been hurtful to those who were assaulted by Gafni, we hope Mackey takes clear, public and effective steps to ameliorate their suffering and to contribute to a climate that welcomes and encourages victims of sexual violence to speak up, rather than a climate that depresses and deters them. If you’ve hurt people, distancing yourself from a wrongdoer isn’t enough. You have a moral duty to do more. We hope to see tangible helpful action by Mackey very soon to lessen the harm he has caused by his irresponsible affiliation with and support for an admitted sex offender.”

Bill Murray, Founder and CEO of NAASCA (National Association of Adult Survivors of Child Abuse):

“Whole Foods’ public statement, ‘there’s nothing else to say on this matter’ is tantamount to collusion with a known sexual predator. As a community, we need to bring light into the shadows of the oft taboo issues of child sexual abuse; to stop the silence and change the culture. On the other hand, John Mackey and the Whole Foods Market Board of Directors have an opportunity here to impress the masses they’d like to reach with the Whole Foods 365 launch. Instead of stepping out of this discussion they

should publicly step up to the plate by taking a responsible corporate stand against child sexual abuse as soon as possible.”

Matthew Sandusky, Founder and Executive Director, Peaceful Hearts Foundation:

“Whole Foods’ public statement, ‘there’s nothing else to say on this matter’ could not be more incorrect. For far too long we have allowed child sex abuse to remain in the shadows of silence. Marc Gafni has admitted to raping a child, yet Whole Foods and John Mackey continue to promote their connection with the known child sex offender. Perpetrators groom their victims into silence and society has reinforced that silence. John Mackey and the Whole Foods Market Board of Directors have an opportunity to reach millions with an important message. Instead of maintaining the societal norm of silence around these issues, I would like to see them take a stand against child sexual abuse publicly — take a leadership role in getting the message across that we can no longer remain silent.”