



**PROTECTNYKIDS.ORG**

## [Whole Foods CEO & Sexual Violence Accountability - Protest](#)

**February 28, 2017, 11am - 1pm  
Omni Hotel, 500 California Street, San Francisco**

### **Experts' Comments**

**[Sandra J. Sucher](#), Professor of Management Practice, Joseph L. Rice, III Faculty Fellow, Harvard Business School, and author, *The Moral Leader: Challenges, Tools, and Insights*:**

“Mackey’s fellow board members of Whole Foods and Conscious Capitalism have a legal duty of care to act in and protect the best interests of their organizations. They need to ask how Mackey’s association with Gafni may affect the reputation of the entities.”

**[Doug White](#), former director, Graduate Program in Fundraising Management, Columbia University, and author, *The Nonprofit Challenge: Integrating Ethics into the Purpose and Promise of Our Nation’s Charities*:**

“There are three basic categories to consider: 1. those actions governed by law, 2. decisions that have no impact — like where you’ll eat dinner tonight, and 3. what we’re talking about in this case — things people care about, but where the law doesn’t go. Gafni’s uncontested, public admission of having sexual contact with a 14-year-old girl is relevant. By definition, as a minor, she could not grant consent. By ignoring this relevant information, Mackey, Whole Foods, and Conscious Capitalism are violating one of the basic mores of ethical decision-making.”

**[Edward L. Queen](#), Director, Ethics and Servant Leadership Program, Center for Ethics, Emory University:**

“The CEO of Whole Foods has managed this horribly. While his latest statement is an improvement in that he finally acknowledges the pain and suffering caused by sexual

abuse, he continues to fail to demonstrate the deep thoughtfulness of response these allegations warrant.”

**[John Paul Rollert](#), Adjunct Assistant Professor of Behavioral Science at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, and writer of the “In-House Ethicist” for the *Chicago Booth Review*:**

“As a moral matter, I find it notable that, as I understand it from our discussion, Conscious Capitalism doesn’t want to have a larger conversation about this situation. If we look at the Sandusky problem at Penn State, or abusive priests in the Catholic Church, or the current Bill Cosby situation, we sometimes ask, ‘How could this have happened?’ One answer may be that people who are in power inadvertently create a culture of silence around them, with others not wanting to speak up or even address a situation for fear of harming their own interests. Who knows if that is the case here, but the unwillingness to have a frank conversation can protect and embolden an abuser and, in some cases, allow for problems of abuse to flourish for decades.”

**[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.”

**[Cary Krosinsky](#), lecturer, Yale Center for Business and the Environment:**

“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.”

**[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.”

**[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.”

**Melissa Agnes, President and co-Founder of Agnes + Day, and Member of the Board of Directors, Online Reputation and Brand Protection Coalition:**

“And while there is such thing as having personal relationships that do not overlap or reflect on the organization for which you work, there are two factors that play into this not being the case for Whole Foods in this particular situation: 1. Mackey is a co-founder of Whole Foods, not just an employee. Therefore, his personal moral and ethical choices are, at least in part, a reflection on his organization; and 2. When you openly choose to have a relationship with an alleged sex offender who has willingly admitted to having had sexual relations with a young girl, your character *will* be judged. And like it or not, as co-CEO, that judgment inevitably reflects upon the organization you represent.”

**Myka N. Held, Esq., Staff Attorney, Legal Assistance Foundation, Former 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. For these reasons alone it is important for us as a society to hold Gafni accountable, and part of the mechanisms for doing so require us to demand that his powerful friends end their support.”

**Nikki DuBose, former model turned author and advocate, board member, Peaceful Hearts Foundation:**

"I will always defend children, always. Adults can make the decision to fight the fight with me, or become like the abusers themselves when they don't stand up for what's right. Let's leave the politics out of helping those who are helpless, get critical laws passed and continue to encourage small businesses and corporations to be ethical leaders and socially responsible."

**Rabbi David Ingber, Director, Romemu:**

“It’s unbelievable to me that someone who has as much to lose as Mackey would have done so little research. Talk about conscious capitalism – this is the most unconscious expression of capitalism that you could possibly imagine.”

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

“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.”

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

“John Mackey continues to besmirch the reputation of Whole Foods by participating in ‘institutional enabling.’ He is the voice and face of Whole Foods, and he risks the investments his stockholders and customers have made in the fabulously successful company.”

**[David Clohessy](#), former Executive Director, SNAP (Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, the organization featured in the movie *Spotlight*):**

“Mackey’s declaration of loyalty to a credibly accused child molester amounts to dangerous disloyalty to kids and survivors. We all like to stand by our friends. But at a certain point, when kids’ safety and survivors’ healing is at stake, responsible adults put the vulnerability of youngsters and survivors ahead of personal preferences.”