

Stop Saipan Sweatshops!!!

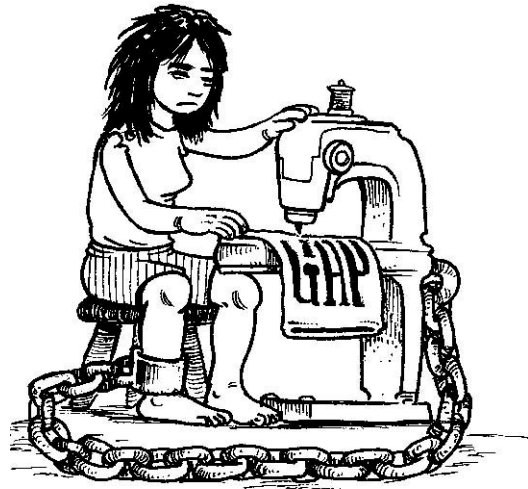
Out in the Pacific Ocean, on a chain of fourteen islands known as the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a \$1 billion garment industry has been booming since the 1980s. Thousands of garment workers live and toil in deplorable conditions, working up to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and earning \$3.05 an hour or less, often without overtime pay. Yet, the clothes these workers sew carry labels that say "Made in the U.S.A."

After World War II, the U.S. won control from Japan of the Northern Mariana Islands (the Marianas). Because of the Marianas' limited economic base, the U.S. delegated control of minimum wage and immigration laws to the Marianas' government. The U.S. also provided for duty free imports of products into the U.S. and no quota restrictions. Last year alone, the federal government estimated that contractors and U.S. retailers avoided more than \$200 million in duties for \$1 billion worth of garments shipped from Saipan, the main island of the Marianas.

With no U.S. import tariffs, no U.S. quota restrictions, a minimum wage of \$3.05, and lax immigration laws, the Marianas has attracted a host of foreign investors from China, Korea and other nations who produce clothes for some of the biggest brand-name labels, at the cost of exploiting workers.

Indentured Labor. Over 90% of garment industry jobs in the Marianas are held by foreign "guest workers," mostly young women from China, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Thailand. With promises of high pay and quality work in the U.S., workers agree to repay recruitment fees from \$2,000 to \$10,000, trapping them in a state of indentured servitude. They often must sign "shadow contracts" waiving basic human rights, including the freedom to join unions, attend religious services, quit or marry.

Inhumane Working and Living Conditions. In the last five years, contractors in Saipan have received more than 1,000 citations for violating U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, many of which were characterized as capable of causing death or serious injury, including blocked exits, fire hazards, unsanitary restrooms, and exposed electrical wiring. The crowded, unsanitary factories and shanty-like housing compounds are in flagrant violation of federal law. The heat in some factories is so extreme it can cause workers to faint. Many live in a room with up to seven other people in inward-pointing barbed wire-enclosed barracks. Their movements are strictly supervised by guards, and are subject to lockdowns or curfews. Complaints about the conditions are met with threats of termination, physical harm, and summary deportation.



Grassroots Campaign and Lawsuit

As a response to the sweatshop abuses in Saipan, on January 13, 1999 Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch, Asian Law Caucus, UNITE, and thousands of workers filed lawsuits to hold corporations accountable for their actions. Some of the demands include the payment of backwages to workers, ban the shadow contracts, and allow for independent monitoring in factories. In addition to the lawsuits, Global Exchange has launched a worldwide campaign to stop GAP sweatshops. Although 17 companies have already settled the lawsuit, GAP continues to be the leading contractor on the island of Saipan. It is our responsibility as consumers to let garment companies and lawmakers know that the exploitation of workers in Saipan must stop.

Who profits from sweatshops on Saipan (partial list):

- The Gap Inc(Banana Republic, Old Navy & GAP)
- J.C. Penney
- ~~Sears Roebuck & Company~~ (Have Settled)
- ~~The May Department Stores Company~~ (Have Settled)
- Dayton-Hudson (Target)
- ~~Tommy Hilfiger USA~~ (Have Settled)
- Lane Bryant (The Limited)
- Levi-Strauss & Co.
- ~~Liz Claiborne~~ (Have Settled)
- Abercrombie & Fitch

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

- Send letters to companies producing in Saipan, asking them to clean up these sweatshops (see sample on back).
- Send Thank You letters to the companies who have settled.
- Support laws that will improve conditions for workers.
- Contact us to get involved in the campaign.
- To learn more about this campaign and the settlements, visit our websites @ www.globalexchange.org, www.sweatshopwatch.org

S a m p l e L e t t e r

Send a FREE fax to the Gap from www.globalexchange.org

Donald Fisher, Chairman
The Gap, Incorporated
One Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

FAX: 415-427-7037

Dear Mr. Fisher,

As a Gap customer, I want to express my concern about the sweatshop conditions and labor abuses on the U.S. island of Saipan. As a global company contracting in dozens of countries worldwide, The Gap has an obligation to its customers and its workers to reverse the race to the bottom in labor standards that is occurring in the garment industry.

In Saipan, The Gap has a responsibility to lead the way towards ending labor and human rights abuses by taking steps to:

- * Protect workers' rights, including the freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- * Abolish the use of labor contracts that deny workers their basic human rights.
- * Ban the collection of recruitment fees and create a trust fund to repay such fees for all present and former workers, and pay return passage for any present or former worker who wishes to return home.
- * Set up a credible, enforceable independent monitoring system, with semiannual public reports, to ensure an end to all labor, health and safety abuses.

I thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

Other Companies Producing Clothing in Saipan: (*) *Settled*

Richard Kuzmich, CEO
Associated Merchandising Corp.
1440 Broadway
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (212) 596-4000
Fax: (212) 596-4300

Robert J. Ulrich, Chairman
Dayton-Hudson Corp.
777 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Tel: (612) 370-6948

James E. Oesterreicher, CEO
J.C. Penney Company, Inc.
6501 Legacy Dr.
Plano, TX 75024
Tel: (972) 431-1000
Fax: (972) 431-1362

(*)Sidney Kimmel, Chairman
Jones Apparel Group, Inc.
2530 Pearl Buck Rd.
Bristol, PA 19007
Tel: (215) 785-4000
Fax: (215) 785-1795

Chief Executive Officer
Lane Bryant, Inc.
Five Limited Parkway East
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
Tel: (614) 577-4000

Leslie H. Wexner, Chairman/CEO
The Limited, Inc.
Three Limited Parkway
Columbus, OH 43230
Tel: (614) 479-7000
Fax: (614) 479-4003

J. Loeb, Chairman
The May Department Stores Co.
611 Olive St.
St. Louis, MO 63101
Tel: (314) 342-6300
Fax: (314) 342-4470

(*)Douglas Hyde, Chairman/CEO
OshKosh B'Gosh, Inc.
112 Otter Ave.
Oshkosh, WI 54901
Tel: (920) 231-8800
Fax: (920) 231-8621

(*)Arthur C. Martinez, CEO
Sears Roebuck & Company
3333 Beverly Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60179
Tel: (847) 286-2500
Fax: (847) 286-7829

(*)Tommy Hilfiger, Chairman
Tommy Hilfiger USA, Inc.
25 West 39th St.
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (212) 575-1148
Fax: (212) 548-1040

Linda Wachner, CEO
Warnaco Group, Inc.
90 Park Ave.
New York, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 661-1300
Fax: (212) 687-6771

Levi Strauss & Co.
1155 Battery Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
tel: (415) 501 6000
fax: (415) 501 7112