

united students against sweatshops



high school organizing manual

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) High School Anti-Sweatshop Organizing Manual. While USAS was founded by college/university students, we have always worked with high school students, and are working hard (with your help!) to develop a bigger and better high school program. In this manual, you'll find a few different campaign ideas and some helpful steps to use when embarking upon these campaigns. This manual is very basic, and should be used as a building block. There is no limit to what you can accomplish.

You'll also find some info on USAS as an organization, the issue of sweatshops, and a list of resources that can help you learn more. Towards the end, you'll also find USAS contact info. Feel free to contact anyone on the list! Remember, USAS is here for you, to provide whatever resources, insight, guidance, etc. that you need.

In Solidarity,

USAS Folks

**If you have come to help me,
you are wasting your time;
But if you've come because your
liberation is bound up with mine,
Then let us work together.**

-Lilla Watson

So, What is UNITED STUDENTS AGAINST SWEATSHOPS Anyway???

Information and frequently asked questions about USAS

What is USAS?

United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) is part of a national movement of student groups and individual students fighting in solidarity with workers for sweatshop-free labor conditions and workers' rights. We define "sweatshop" broadly and recognize that it is not limited to the apparel industry. Members of USAS use their power as students to help organize international solidarity campaigns and support U.S. workers in living wage fights, farm labor organizing, immigrant rights campaigns, and other struggles for justice. While USAS literally made its name fighting sweatshops in the apparel industry, we are unambiguously committed to fighting labor exploitation of all kinds.

USAS' three cornerstone campaigns are the Sweat-Free Campus Campaign, the Ethical Contracting Campaign, and the Campus Living Wage Campaign. In addition to these campaigns, USAS was also heavily involved in the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride of the fall of 2003, and in the implementation of the New American Freedom Summer in 2004, registering immigrant voters throughout Arizona and Florida. USAS also launched a civic participation program in the spring, summer, and fall, of 2004, focusing on non-partisan get out the vote work on college campuses. USAS coordinates an international summer internship program, sending students to intern with worker support organizations around the world, and holds a number of international delegations each year. In the summer of 2005, USAS sent 16 interns to 13 countries to conduct research on wages and working conditions in the collegiate apparel industry, and to support ongoing organizing campaigns. USAS affiliates maintain local autonomy, and are able to strategize nationally and internationally in order to bring about concrete change on many levels.

What is the Sweat-Free Campus Campaign?

USAS began building student power in solidarity with workers worldwide by focusing on collegiate apparel -- the \$3 billion market of clothes made with our schools' logos. Our school administrations give companies like Nike and Jansport permission to produce apparel with the school name emblazoned on it. Students and workers together are demanding that our schools use their leverage to ensure living wages, decent working conditions, and the right to organize into democratic unions. USAS fights to ensure that our universities adopt ethically and legally strong codes of conduct, full public disclosure of company information, and support independent monitoring by the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), to ensure that workers can have a voice at work. We use our power as students to affect the larger industry that thrives on secrecy, exploitation, and the power relations of a flawed system.

What is the Campus Living Wage Campaign?

Many USAS affiliates have long worked to support workers on campus and in the surrounding community. As a result of this work, USAS initiated an exciting effort to bring together campus

living wage and campus worker solidarity campaigns across the country in a coordinated effort to force our schools to ensure living wages, decent working conditions, and the right to organize on our campuses. For USAS, a campus "living wage" campaign is defined as any struggle to ensure that workers on campus do not receive poverty wages, whatever the mechanism to remedy the exploitation — be it an organizing drive, a contract campaign, an effort to kick an egregious subcontractor off campus, or a campaign to win a wage floor that adjusts to the cost of living. Dozens of schools have been forced to adopt living wage policies after successful student and worker organizing; and dozens of other campaigns are currently underway.

What is the Ethical Contracting Campaign?

Because of USAS' success with the Sweat-Free Campus campaign, students' decided that it wasn't enough to only hold our schools accountable for their licensing contracts, but that other purchasing and contractual relationship also bring with them a responsibility towards the people making these products and performing these services. Ethical contracting campaigns work to ensure that all products purchased by our educational institutions are manufactured under conditions that respect the basic rights of workers. This includes everything from computers and vending machines to food products and furniture and has used many tactics; some USAS affiliates have pressured their administrations to adopt ethical contracting guidelines (similar to the codes of conduct originally adopted under the Sweat-Free Campus Campaign), while other schools have chosen to target specific companies (such as Coca-Cola in response to violent union busting in Colombia, and Taco Bell due to the egregious violation of the rights of its agricultural workers in Immokalee, Florida). The latter campaigns most often include demanding that schools stop doing business with these abusive employers. USAS students across the country are currently working hard to flesh out national and local strategies in order to make this campaign more successful.

How do I (or we) become a member of USAS?

Students and young people can hook into the national network of student-labor activists that is USAS, and join in the local, national, or international work they are doing whether or not they are affiliated with USAS. However, USAS encourages student-labor solidarity groups to "affiliate" to USAS because as we build our network, we build our power...and thus our ability to do good work. Affiliates may vote and run in elections, and their campus contacts will receive resources from the national office. In order to affiliate, groups simply discuss the Principles of Unity (below) and agree as a group to work to uphold them. A group then emails or calls the national office with the group's contact information (202 NO SWEAT or organize@usasnet.org), or registers on our website (www.studentsagainstssweatshops.org). It's that simple!

Gee, all this sounds great. How do I take action now?

As with just about everything else these days, the world of student labor solidarity is increasingly fast-paced. USAS often hears about worker rights abuses occurring in factories, in fields, in our communities, and in our educational institutions that require immediate responses. The best way to find out about these situations quickly and respond rapidly is by being part of our e-mail action alert system. By signing up, you will receive e-mails whenever an urgent situation arises, and will be able to send e-mails and faxes to the egregious employer immediately. To sign up, visit our website at <http://www.studentsagainstssweatshops.org>, and enter your e-mail address under the "Join the USAS Network" section.

While E-Activism is great, and is becoming increasingly common, it is on-the-ground worker organizing that results in victories for justice, and it is students' job to educate, agitate, and organize around these issues. Joining your local USAS chapter, or forming a new one, is the best way to begin your involvement with these issues. Donating to USAS (which can also be done through our website) also furthers the struggle for worker justice, as every penny raised helps USAS continue its work.

How is USAS structured and what are all those acronyms?

Regions and Regional Organizers (RO):

USAS is divided into eight regions: Southeast, Southwest, Rockies, Northwest, California, Midwest, Northeast, and Mid-Atlantic. There are 1-2 regional organizers for each of the regions, chosen through an application process by their peers and paid a stipend. Regional organizers facilitate connections between students regionally to coordinate and support campaigns. They also act as a resource for new campus activists, and as a quick connection to the national office.

High School Organizers:

Similar to the regional organizers, USAS also has high school organizers charged with keeping in touch with high school students around the country and supporting their campaigns.

The Coordinating Committee (CC):

The Coordinating Committee is a 13-member elected decision-making body of USAS. The CC acts as a governing board, and is responsible for both staff oversight and the day-to-day decision making of the organization. Four of the members are representatives of USAS' identity caucuses (see below), four are committee representatives (International Solidarity Committee, Farmworker Solidarity/Ethical Contracting Committee, Campus Community Solidarity Committee, and the WRC Affiliation Committee), two are regional organizers, one is a WRC governing board representative, and two of the seats are at-large positions.

Caucuses:

Four identity caucuses exist within USAS structure: a womyn/genderqueer caucus, a people of color caucus, a queer caucus, and a working class caucus. These caucuses attempt to offer a safe institutional space and structure for traditionally underrepresented groups to meet and discuss issues regarding the inclusiveness and direction of USAS, and work to further USAS' commitment to anti-oppression and identity work. Each caucus has an email list-serv, and periodic conference calls.

Standing Committees:

There are five standing committees open to all members of USAS with a commitment to building our movement. They are:

Alliance-Building Committee (ABC): The ABC strives to help USAS avoid falling into the patterns of privilege; to ensure representation of all students in USAS in the leadership; to educate; to facilitate effective caucuses; and to collect/distribute literature on racism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, classism, and being an ally.

International Solidarity Committee (ISC): The ISC is dedicated to communicating and acting in solidarity with workers around the world. It acts as a vehicle for student-worker communication, and directs major USAS solidarity campaigns with our international allies.

Campus/Community Solidarity Committee (CCSC): The CCSC is a network for students and workers campaigning in their campuses and communities. It assists in the coordination and planning of student/worker solidarity campaigns.

Farmworker Solidarity/Ethical Contracting Committee (FSC/ESC): The FSC helps build strong relationships between students and farmworkers. It seeks to assist in coordination and planning of farmworker solidarity campaigns. Recently, the Farmworker Solidarity Committee has also been working on other ethical contracting campaigns, such as the campaign against Coca-Cola.

WRC Affiliation Committee: The WRC affiliation committee helps USAS chapters affiliate with the Worker Rights Consortium, and seeks to foster both local and national strategy.

Besides these standing committees, ad-hoc working groups often organize around particular campaigns. For example, a New Era working group formed when USAS students supported striking workers at the New Era Cap Company during the 2001-2002 school year.

Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) Board Representatives:

Five representatives elected by our membership represent USAS on the WRC Governing Board. They also help coordinate students across the country who are running WRC affiliation campaigns. For more information about the WRC, check out www.workersrights.org.

Staff:

USAS has national offices in Washington DC and New York City, and currently has four full-time staff members. Allie Robbins serves as the National Organizer for Development, Camilo Romero serves as the National Organizer for Outreach, Jessica Rutter serves as the National Organizer for Program, and Max Toth serves as the National Organizer for Campus and Community Solidarity. All of the staff are available to answer student questions and provide campaign support. You may contact any of the national staff via email at organize@usasnet.org or call them at 202/NO-SWEAT. The staff is accountable to the Coordinating Committee, and has the principal role of working with students to carry out USAS' core campaigns and other student initiatives.

How can we (or I) get more involved in USAS, locally and/or nationally?

There are lots of ways to get involved with USAS work. One important first step is to simply join the national email list-serve, where you'll hear about upcoming actions, campaigns, and other events. To subscribe, simply send a blank email message to usas-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Other ways to begin your involvement include talking to current coordinating committee members, regional organizers, and staff. They can hook you up with students in your area and the work they are doing, help you get on regional list-serves, and tell you when group events or conference calls are scheduled. You can also just call the national office (202 NO SWEAT) and ask them to direct you to students who are doing USAS work in your part of the country, or ask them to discuss starting a group, running a campaign, or resolving difficult issues that might arise in your organizing work. Our network exists so that students can support each other and build the power of all involved.

How to Contact United Students Against Sweatshops:

United Students Against Sweatshops
1150 17th St NW Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036
202 NO SWEAT // fax: 202.293.5308
www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org // organize@usasnet.org

Principles of Unity

The principles of unity below have been drafted as an assessment of the spirit and of the issues which bring students on campuses across North America together to create a united youth front against sweatshops.

Hopefully, these principles touch on the underlying consciousness we are all developing, within ourselves as individuals and within our collectives, whether they be local, regional, national, or international.

The abuse of sweatshop labor is among the most blatant examples of the excesses and exploitation of the global economy. We recognize, however, that the term “sweatshop” is not limited to the apparel industry as traditionally conceived; sweatshop conditions exist in the fields, in the prisons, on our campuses, in the power relations of a flawed system.

Thus, we consider all struggles against the systemic problems of the global economy to be directly or by analogy a struggle against sweatshops. Whether a campus group focuses its energies on the apparel industry or on another form of sweatshop, agreement with the principles below will be used as the sole requisite for working under the name of United Students Against Sweatshops.

The USAS Principles of Unity

1. We work in solidarity with working people's struggles. In order to best accomplish this and in recognition of the interconnections between local and global struggles, we strive to build relationships with other progressive movements and cooperate in coalition with other groups struggling for justice within all communities campus, local, regional, and international.
2. We struggle against racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and other forms of oppression within our society, within our organizations, and within ourselves. Not only are we collectively confronting these prejudices as inherent defects of the global economy which creates sweatshops, but we also recognize the need for individuals to confront the prejudices they have internalized as the result of living and learning in a flawed and oppressive society.
3. We are working in coalition to build a grassroots student movement that challenges corporate power and that fights for economic justice. This coalition is loosely defined, thus we strive to act in coordination with one another to mobilize resources and build a national network while reserving the autonomy of individuals and campuses. We do not impose a single ideological position, practice, or approach; rather, we aim to support one another in a spirit of respect for difference, shared purpose and hope.
4. We strive to act democratically. With the understanding that we live and learn in a state of imperfect government, we attempt to achieve truer democracy in making decisions which affect our collective work. Furthermore, we strive to empower one another as individuals and as a collective through trust, patience, and an open spirit.

The power of these principles to unify us as United Students Against Sweatshops ultimately rests with the individual. Self-evaluation and personal responsibility are critical to the effectiveness of our work we all must continue to struggle as individuals in order to struggle in concert, thus we strive for compassion and support for one another as we continue this endeavor together.

Sweatshop Basics

The following was adapted from www.sweatshopwatch.org

What is a sweatshop, and where are sweatshops found?

A sweatshop is a workplace that violates the law and where workers are subject to:

- ★ Extreme exploitation, including the absence of a living wage or long work hours, o Poor working conditions, such as health and safety hazards,
- ★ Arbitrary discipline, such as verbal or physical abuse, or
- ★ Fear and intimidation when they speak out, organize, or attempt to form a union.

With ten of thousands of garment factories employing tens of millions of workers in nearly 200 countries, large corporations search the world for the lowest labor costs and ignore human rights. Unfortunately, sweatshops exist in every corner of the world, from China to Mexico and Kenya to Turkey. These workplaces generally pay poverty wages, force workers to labor long hours, employ child labor, deny workers the right to form a union, fire women who become pregnant or subject workers to dangerous conditions. Even in the U.S., sweatshops exist. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor found that 67% of Los Angeles garment factories don't pay workers minimum wage or overtime.

Where can I get a list of companies that do not use sweatshops?

Given the nature of the garment industry, it is difficult to develop a list of companies that do not use sweatshop labor. Tens of millions of garment workers make clothing in tens of thousands of factories across the globe. The U.S. alone employs about 500,000 garment workers in 20,000 factories.

Corporate giants such as Disney make their products in over 20,000 factories around the world. Assessing the working conditions in such a large and far-flung industry is nearly impossible, especially because these retailers do not disclose their factory locations and because they can easily move production as workers demand better conditions.

- ★ Clothing with a union label can ensure that the garment was not made under sweatshop conditions. Unions enable workers to establish collective bargaining agreements with factories that outline the conditions that workers and management agree to.
- ★ Worker-owned cooperatives, or co-ops, are collectively owned and operated by the workers, so workers have control over their conditions.
- ★ Fair trade organizations work primarily with small businesses, worker-owned and democratically-run cooperatives, and associations that bring significant benefits to workers and their communities. By banding together, workers are able to access credit, reduce raw material costs and establish higher and more just prices for their products. Workers earn a greater return on their labor, and profits are distributed more equitably and often reinvested in community projects such as health clinics, child care, education, and literacy training. Workers learn important leadership and organizing skills, enabling self-reliant grassroots-driven development.

While the answers are not easy, do not despair. Individual buying choices can impact society, especially if those choices of how you spend your cash threaten to interfere with corporate profits. But, most importantly, our consumer choices should be made in solidarity with workers. Sweatshop Watch urges consumers to recognize worker-led campaigns-including boycotts that

are led by workers themselves-and participate in the fight for fair working conditions. United workers and consumers can effectively change the system.

See Sweatshop Watch's Shop with a Conscience page for sweat-free products.
(<http://sweatshopwatch.org/index.php?s=59>)

What is your stance on boycotting? Do boycotts actually hurt workers?

Sweatshop Watch only supports boycotts that are led by workers themselves. Boycotts that are not well organized may harm workers by creating less demand for products, thus forcing workers out of jobs. If you as a consumer decide to avoid certain companies, that is your personal choice, and we encourage you to "shop with your conscience". We believe that boycotts are effective when it is the workers who have decided that that is what they need in order to have their voices heard, and we then ask consumers to support workers by boycotting or writing letters so that manufacturers will see that their profits are truly at stake. One major component to ending sweatshop conditions in the garment industry involves helping workers to empower themselves so that they are not so vulnerable to exploitive situations, and the way to do this is to help workers realize the tools they need to organize.

Where can I find information on specific companies and their labor practices?

Several resources exist that may help you research the labor practices of a company you are concerned about. While Sweatshop Watch cannot verify their methods of gathering information about specific companies, we offer these links as resources to help you learn more about particular companies:

- ★ CorpWatch provides a research guide for activists, students, socially conscious investors, journalists and consumers. You can find information on not only how to research companies, but also on labor, environmental and shareholder actions, links to other resources, and even how to request data through the Freedom of Information Act.
- ★ Working Assets and Co-Op America sponsor Responsible Shopper, an on-line tool that helps consumers make smarter purchasing decisions. The site includes a search engine that allows you access to information on hundreds of companies in different industries, such as the garment, toy or electronics industries.
- ★ Transnational Corporations Observatory is a citizens' portal on brands and corporations. You can search for the profile of one of over 9,500 companies in the transnational database. Profiles list the subsidiaries or parent companies of the brand, their social and environmental records, the numbers of jobs they have cut and their human rights abuses.

How much of the retail price goes to the worker versus the corporate executives?

In general, workers sewing garments are paid only a tiny fraction of the sale price of these garments, usually only 6% or \$6 from a dress that retails for \$100. Each worker gets less than 1% of the sale price. In the pricing and profit hierarchy, retailers (those who sell the clothing) are at the top while workers trail behind at the bottom. Here is an example of where the dollars go when you buy an article of clothing:

Workers Get a Tiny Fraction of the Sale Price of a Garment

Retail Price: \$100

Retailer: \$50

Manufacturer/Brand Name Label: \$50
 Keeps \$12.50 to cover expenses and profit
 Spends \$22.50 on textiles
 Pays \$15 to the contractor

Contractor/Factory: \$15
 Keeps \$9 to cover expenses and profit
 Pays \$6 to the workers

Workers: \$6

A comparison of wages between garment workers and corporate executives, or CEOs, also highlights where your clothing dollars go.

Salaries for Apparel Executives

CEO	Company	Annual Salary ^[6]	Hourly Wage ^[7]
Philip Marinneau	Levi-Strauss & Co.	\$24.9 million	\$11,971
Tommy Hilfiger	Tommy Hilfiger Corp.	\$22.4 million	\$10,769
Ralph Lauren	Polo Ralph Lauren	\$4.5 million	\$2,163
Paul Charron	Liz Claiborne Inc.	\$3.12 million	\$1,500
Paul Fireman	Reebok	\$3.1 million	\$1,490
Philip Knight	Nike	\$2.73 million	\$1,312

Average Hourly Wages in Apparel Industry

Country/Region	Hourly Wage ^[8]
Mexico	\$1.75
South Africa	\$1.57
Malaysia	\$1.36
El Salvador	\$1.08
Mauritius	\$0.94
China	\$0.86
India	\$0.71
Sri Lanka	\$0.57
Indonesia	\$0.24
Pakistan	\$0.23

The wage disparity between CEOs and garment workers demonstrates the need for corporate accountability. If apparel companies were willing to cut their salaries, profits or even advertising budgets by a tiny fraction, they could pay their workers a living wage.

Why do companies use child labor, and don't these jobs help the child's family survive?

Many believe that companies hire children because they are less likely to complain about poor working conditions. Child labor is often a symptom of poverty and lack of education. If adult workers do not earn enough wages to meet their basic needs, if they cannot afford child care, or if they have no schools to send their children to, they may be forced to send their children to work.

Many child laborers are in exploitative conditions with low wages, long working hours, no medical or welfare facilities, no proper meals or accommodations, no permanent employment status, exposed to dangerous working environments with few educational opportunities. Some children are working under bonded and slave-like conditions, harmful to physical, emotional growth and development. Even those who find jobs in favorable working conditions are outside the social safety nets of family, school, trade union, and employment or welfare laws. These conditions are unacceptable for children.

What laws protect garment workers? Are they being enforced?

One of the main U.S. labor laws is the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) adopted in 1938. The basic requirements are:

- ★ Payment of the minimum wage. Today, the federal minimum wage is \$5.15 per hour, but this can vary from state to state. For example, Washington state adopted a minimum wage of \$7.16 per hour, and California's minimum wage is \$6.75 per hour.
- ★ Overtime pay for covered employees who are not exempt from receiving such pay, calculated as time worked over 40 hours in a workweek, at a rate of not less than one and one-half times the regular rate of pay.
- ★ Restrictions on the employment of children. The child labor provisions include some restrictions on hours of work for youth under 16 years of age and lists of hazardous occupations too dangerous for young workers to perform.
- ★ Recordkeeping. Employers are required to keep records on wages, hours, and other items which are generally maintained as an ordinary business practice.

Even with these laws, the reality is that the federal and state labor departments are underfunded and understaffed. While the numbers of employers and workers has grown, there are not enough inspectors to ensure high compliance with labor laws. Some unscrupulous businesses will even risk breaking the law as a cost of doing business, knowing that there is a small chance that they will be inspected.

In addition, the international community has recognized several core labor standards. These are based on international human rights law and are contained in the International Labor Organization's (ILO) 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its corresponding conventions. The Declaration lists the core labor standards as:

- ★ freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively,
- ★ the elimination of forced labor,
- ★ the abolition of child labor, and
- ★ the elimination of discrimination in employment.

The standards express the fundamental rights that all human beings have in the workplace. While the ILO does not have power to enforce these standards, member countries must respect them.

For more information, see the U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.dol.gov>) and the International Labor Organization (<http://www.ilo.org>).

CAMPAIGNS

The best way to begin supporting workers rights is to run an organized campaign in solidarity with workers. Here we will be talking about USAS three national campaigns – the Sweat-Free Campus Campaign, the National Campus Living Wage Campaign, and the Ethical Contracting Campaign/Campaign to Stop Killer Coke. At the end of the campaign section is a section on strategy. It is extremely important to fully plan out your campaign before you begin.

Sweat-Free Schools Campaign!

The Sweat-Free Campus Campaign utilizes the strategic leverage of students to harness the economic power of educational institutions, and alter the relations of power within the global garment industry. It is in your own school district that you can have the largest impact and see the greatest tangible results. You have power as students and you have strength in numbers. Sweat-free school campaigns help to make sure that the apparel sold and used by your school district is made under conditions that uphold the rights of workers. The following is an attempt to be a basic guide to engaging in a high school sweat-free school campaign. These campaigns are quite new, and there is not a lot of precedent, nor is there ever an exact model in organizing. Go forth and make USAS history.

An exciting development has just emerged in the world of anti-sweatshop organizing. In the fall of 2004, the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) began accepting high school and school district affiliates, for the first time ever. The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) is a non-profit organization created by students, labor rights experts, and workers from across the globe with participation from college and university administrators. The WRC's purpose is to enforce manufacturing codes of conduct adopted by colleges, universities, high schools, and school districts; these codes are designed to ensure that factories producing clothing and other goods bearing school logos respect the basic rights of workers, such as the freedom of association and overtime pay. Today there are nearly 150 colleges and universities affiliated with the WRC, using their leverage in the \$3 billion collegiate apparel market to support workers' rights in the global economy. USAS students have been the driving force behind the WRC since day one. We are the ones who work on our campuses to pressure our administrations to adopt codes and affiliate. It is through this process that we build our power as students to be in solidarity with workers who are organizing globally. The WRC has been enormously successful in its support for worker organizing in locations from the Kukdong factory in Puebla, Mexico to the New Era factory in upstate New York, as well as the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Kenya, and elsewhere. The WRC affiliation campaign is part of a strategy for any student group that is working to build power for labor justice.

In the fall of 2005, United Students Against Sweatshops is launching a new phase of our Sweat-Free Campus Campaign. We are now demanding that brands producing apparel with school logos produce 25% of their logo apparel from good factories. We define good factories as those in which workers have the right and ability to organize democratic unions, and where they are able to earn a living wage. In order to make this a reality, brands will be forced to pay factories more per order so that workers may make a living wage. This requirement of 25% will increase to 50% at the end of two years and 75% after three years. If we are successful, USAS will once again alter the functions of the global garment industry and help shift the balance of power towards the side of workers.

campaigns to join the worker rights consortium

Updated July 2005



What is the WRC? Why should my school join?

The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) is a non-profit organization created by students, labor rights experts, and workers from across the globe with participation from college and university administrators. The WRC's purpose is to enforce manufacturing codes of conduct adopted by colleges, universities, high schools, and school districts; these codes are designed to ensure that factories producing clothing and other goods bearing school logos respect the basic rights of workers, such as the freedom of association and overtime pay. Today there are more than 140 colleges and universities affiliated with the WRC, using their leverage in the \$3 billion collegiate apparel market to support workers' rights in the global economy. In the fall of 2004, the WRC opened its doors to affiliations from the high school and school district levels. USAS students have been the driving force behind the WRC since day one. We are the ones who work on our campuses to pressure our administrations to adopt codes and affiliate. It is through this process that we build our power as students to be in solidarity with workers who are organizing globally. The WRC has been enormously successful in its support for worker organizing in locations from the Kukdong factory in Puebla, Mexico to the New Era factory in upstate New York, as well as the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and elsewhere. The WRC affiliation campaign is part of a strategy for any student group that is working to build power for labor justice.

Resources United Students Against Sweatshops can offer you:

- ★ Materials to do educational events at your school, such as videos, literature, and speakers.
- ★ An organizing manual to help you formulate campaign strategy.
- ★ Connections to labor and community organizations in your area that will be your allies in these campaigns, as well as connections to worker organizations around the world.
- ★ A whole network of students around the country who are running these campaigns and winning! USAS chapters have so much to offer each other in terms of strategy, advice, and student power.
- ★ Assistance from the charming and experienced USAS staff!
- ★ Let us know what else you need!

What schools are currently running WRC affiliation campaigns?

Amherst College, Amherst, MA
 University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
 University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
 San Jose State, San Jose, CA
 The George Washington University, Washington, DC...and many more!

For more information, contact USAS at organize@usasnet.org

The New Sweat-Free Campus Campaign

August, 2005

This Fall semester, USAS is launching an ambitious new campaign that will vastly strengthen the power of the campus anti-sweatshop movement. Under the new proposal, university apparel companies will be forced to produce garments in truly sweat-free factories where workers have a voice on the job and the power to win livable wages.

The Problem: Though universities have adopted anti-sweatshop policies, the reality is that university apparel is still made under sweatshop conditions in factories around the world.

Sweatshop conditions and poverty wages: Workers making university apparel face abusive treatment, excessive working hours, dangerous conditions, and wages that are inadequate to meet basic needs.

- ★ **Illegal repression:** When workers organize and demand improvements, they are subject to threats, harassment, illegal firings, and the closure of their factories.
- ★ **The race to the bottom:** As multinational brands scan the globe for the cheapest products, supplier factories face tremendous pressure to keep costs to a bare minimum. In this reality, workers and their unions have little hope of winning the wages and conditions they need.

The Solution: University apparel should be made in designated sweat-free factories, where workers have a voice on the job to stop sweatshop abuses and earn a living wage.

- ★ **A voice on the job:** The best way to eliminate sweatshops is for workers to have the power to advocate for their interests on a daily basis through the collective voice of a union. University products must be made in factories where workers have this voice to eliminate sweatshop abuses.
- ★ **A living wage:** The prices paid by U.S. clothing companies are simply too low for factories to pay workers enough to meet their basic needs. In order for workers to earn the income they need, we must require brands to pay the designated factories prices high enough to enable living wages.
- ★ **An alternative to the Wal-Mart model:** Currently, most university apparel is produced in the same factories that produce for big box retailers like Wal-Mart, and under the sweatshop conditions that Wal-Mart has established as norms for the industry. We must create an alternative model – a race to the top – in which university apparel is produced in factories that demonstrate respect for worker rights – not just low prices – and in which worker victories are sustained and protected.

**SWEATSHOP UNIVERSITY?
Students say NO.**

Some Possible Campaign Steps:

(Note: Many of these steps can/should be done simultaneously.)

Step 1: Start A Group and Strategize

Grab a few friends, start an anti-sweatshop group, and affiliate with USAS. Your group doesn't have to be solely focused on sweatshops in order to affiliate. (See the "What is USAS Anyway?" section at the beginning of this manual for instructions on how to affiliate your student organization). Each school has a different policy for starting student groups -- find out what it is, and follow it. You will most likely need a staff or faculty advisor, so try to find a sympathetic teacher and express your ideas. Once you have a few core members, and are established as a student organization, it is a good idea to hold a larger public meeting. You can publicize this meeting through flyers, posters, class announcements, and any other way in which activities are usually publicized in your school. You may wish to brainstorm the structure of your organization before you hold the big meeting, but be flexible and take ideas. New members should always feel welcome and like their input is valued.

Before launching a campaign, you need to come up with concrete demands and a campaign strategy (see the strategy section later in the manual). You can ask for all of your demands at once, or you can start small. Winning small victories along the way helps build momentum and keep people interested and involved. For example, if you don't think your administration will agree to join the WRC right away, you may ask for factory disclosure information first, and then a code of conduct. Having preliminary demands in mind will make your meetings with administrators much more productive and can also help guide the public education component of your campaign.

Step 2: Research

In order to hold a successful campaign, you are going to need to know who you should be targeting. You need to find out who is in charge of purchasing for your school district. The types of clothing that you are looking into are school logo items (those items with the name of your school on it) -- team uniforms, janitor uniforms, cafeteria worker uniforms, and student uniforms (if they exist). This research process may be as simple as asking your advisor or another teacher. You may also try calling the administration office and asking them for the information.

Step 3: Write a Letter

Once you find out who is in charge of purchasing, you should write him/her a letter to let him/her know what you're thinking. You may also wish to cc the letter to the members of your school board and your superintendent. There are two basic things that you may wish to ask for, the first of which is full public disclosure of the names and locations of the factories where all of your clothing is manufactured. The person in charge of purchasing should have this information. If he/she does not, h/she should be able obtain it from the companies that produce for your school district.

You should also ask your school to pass a resolution to become "sweat-free." (See the sample resolution in the appendix.) This resolution would force your district to take working conditions

into consideration every time they make a purchasing deal. It is often a good idea to begin simply with clothing, and expand the resolution to include all purchasing at a later date. You should also offer to set up a meeting with the head of purchasing to discuss this issue in greater detail, so he/she doesn't feel obligated to automatically say yes or no.

Step 4: Educate and Agitate!

This step is critical. You need to get the student body behind you. The best way to gain their support is to let them know what you're doing. For this step you can do all or some of the items listed under campaign activities. You should, however, focus primarily on issues relating to your school, and keep it as concrete as possible. Let folks know what you're asking from the district and ask them join you in the cause. Bring petitions and invite students to meetings and to participate in the further steps of your campaign. Every time you talk to a student or a classroom of students, leave them with an ask – ask them to sign a petition, to write a letter, to come to a meeting or rally.

It's also a good idea to go down to the junior high/middle schools and elementary schools in your district to gather more support. For them, you may wish to focus mostly on child labor, as opposed to sweatshop labor in general. Elementary school children can relate to the idea of children their age, or not much older, working long hours instead of being able to go to school. You know what will best work to reach the student body in your district. Be creative!

Step 5: Gather Faculty and Staff Support

This step may be difficult to do, as it is an intimidating prospect. You may want to tackle the teaching faculty and administration separately from the staff of your school. Begin with teachers that you know and speak to them about what you're doing. Try to gather a few supporters. You can also put information in the teacher's mailboxes. You may even be able to make a short presentation at a faculty meeting. The staff in your district, particularly the cafeteria and janitorial staff, is a unique and significant ally because they wear much of the clothing that you are working to make sweat-free. You see these staff members every day, so start by talking to one or two that you know or are at least familiar with. Try to set up a meeting after school with a group of staff so that you can explain your campaign. Bring petitions and invite them to be an involved part of the rest of your organizing.

Step 6: Appeal to the Community

Members of the community can be great allies, especially local religious, community, and labor groups. Your parents are also a very important resource. Try going to your local congregations and civic organizations and ask for their support. You may wish to ask them to pass a resolution supporting your sweat-free campus initiative. You can also leaflet outside of local grocery stores and other stores (you probably need to get permission from the stores first) to get your message out to the community. Look up local labor unions in your area – unions often love working with students and can be very helpful with both resources and organizing tips. Create a petition that community members can sign.

Step 7: Go to the School Board

Obviously, the path that your campaign will take is highly dependent on what happens at each step along the way. If your director of purchasing agrees after your first letter or first meeting to disclose all of the factory information and affiliate with the Worker Rights Consortium, you don't need to do much else (except publicize the victory and celebrate!). Unfortunately, most campaigns are not that simple. All school boards should hold public meetings during which there is time for public comment. After you have written your first letter, and once you have established a group and raised awareness, it's time to bring the issue to the school board publicly. Bring with you as many students, faculty, staff, parents, and community members as possible. Have one or two people designated to speak at the appropriate time. Deliver petitions to the school board (remember to also make copies for the director of purchasing and keep the originals for yourself), as you explain your case. You may wish to purchase buttons, stickers, or t-shirts to act as a very visible reminder to the school board as they look out into the crowd that you have a large and powerful presence. You may need to return to the school board several times.

Step 8: Publicize

This step should be done throughout your campaign. You want the word to get out at every stage. Write letters to your local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Make sure the information gets in your school newspaper. Get the word out that the issue of sweat-free schools has been raised to the administration. Invite the media to any leafleting or other actions that you do, and especially invite them to come to the school board meetings. If your administration knows that the community is watching, they will be more inclined to act quickly, and if you can get a good deal of support through the media, you will have a better chance of victory.

Step 9: Celebrate!

Sweat-free campus campaigns can take several years or several months; so don't get discouraged! However, once you have been successful, pat yourself on the back and celebrate!

Step 10: Follow-up

One of the major problems with student organizing is that students graduate, and consequently the turnover rate in student organizations is very high. Sometimes administrators think that they can stop keeping their promises once the people they made promises to graduate. Keep following up with your director of purchasing to make sure he/she is following through with the implementation of the sweat-free resolution. Make sure that this follow through continues even after you graduate by developing leadership in younger students and involving them in the campaign. Make sure younger students know the history of the campaign before they got to your school so they can pass on the campaign even after they graduate.

Some Possible Campaign Activities:

Putting up Posters

Depending on the poster policy of your school, you may be allowed to put up large posters in the hallways of your high school (find out the rules first). It is a good idea to make these posters simple and colorful. They can be as simple as a question such as, "Do you know who made your shoes?" or a fact such as, "The average hourly wage for a garment worker in Indonesia is \$0.24." These posters should include contact information for your group so that people can find out how to get involved and get more information. These posters can also be used to promote an event you are holding, or highlight a specific policy or statement of your administration.

Leafletting

A simple educational tactic is to hand out leaflets outside (or inside -- depending upon the policies of your school) with information. These flyers should be fairly comprehensive, and should have educational information, a way to help, as well as contact information for where people can get more information. As with the posters, they should also include graphics, and otherwise capture people's attention as they walk by you.

Teach-Ins

This is a great way to get your information out to a large number of people at one time. The best way to do this would probably be to obtain a room in your high school after school or during lunch periods. You may need a teacher to reserve a room for you. This takes a good deal of planning -- you will need to plan a presentation to fill the time allotted (leaving ample time for questions). Keep it simple and make it interesting. (See sample class presentation in the appendix). You may wish to show part or all of a movie about sweatshops as well. The USAS office can help you pick a movie that is appropriate. It is also a good idea to have handouts (which can be as simple as fact sheets) to give members of the audience. The teach-in should start by discussing the basics of the issue of sweatshop labor. Remember to illustrate the point that sweatshops are not simply a foreign phenomena, they exist right here in the US, and probably not far from your high school. Peer-peer teach-ins are often most effective, so have a couple of students lead the teach-in. If you wish, you may also be able to get a member of USAS leadership or someone involved in workers rights activism in your community to come to your high school in order to help out. It's also a good idea to have a petition or something concrete for students to do if they want to help. (See sample petition in appendix.) It's ok to say, "I don't know," if you aren't sure how to answer a specific question. No one knows everything. You can always get their contact info and get back to them after you've researched the topic. Making answers up is never a good idea, and could seriously hurt the credibility of your campaign. Remember to talk about your campaign and offer people a concrete way to get involved.

Class Presentations

Class presentations can follow the same basic formula as a teach-in, but can be done during class periods. For this you should ask teachers in your school to give you time to present.

Teachers may not wish to give you the whole class period, so it is best to ask for 10-15 minutes, and make your presentation short. Have petitions and handouts available, as you would if you were preparing a teach-in. This is even more important in a short class presentation because you won't have as much time to present and answer questions. Make sure students have your contact information, so they can get in touch with you if they want to learn more or get involved.

Letter Writing

A simple way to target your principle or school board is through a letter-writing campaign. This letter can outline certain horrific practices that your research uncovers, and can express your concern. Be sure to highlight the fact that you are a student and you don't want your school's apparel being made under exploitative conditions. School board members are often elected officials, and you are one of their constituents. You can use this as leverage and make school board members think that parents and community members won't vote for them if they do not engage positively on this issue. If you are targeting a principle or other administrator, remember that your parent's tax dollars pay their salary. That's leverage also. You may wish to get a number of students/staff/faculty at your school to all sign letters and send them in one big envelope, or present all of the letters at during a school board meeting or school-wide assembly. These letters can be personalized, or they can all be the same, simply with different signatures. It is a good idea to ask people to also include their addresses when they sign the letters, in order to counter any suspicions of illegitimacy. (See sample letter in appendix – this can be easily adapted from a corporate letter to a letter to a school administrator.)

Anti-Sweatshop Fashion Show

This is an extremely entertaining activity that can be done either as an organized event inside an auditorium setting or as part of a demonstration. This event is a parody on the normal fashion show, and it has the potential to draw a large crowd. It requires one or two announcers and several models. You may be able to get the clothing donated, however, it will probably be easy enough to borrow clothing from friends. As models walk across the stage, the announcers will discuss the conditions under which the clothing is made, instead not its fashionable qualities. You can make the show funny and entertaining, while still getting your point across. You can either use clothes from famous name brands in order to highlight the issue of sweatshops in general, or you can focus only on the clothing from your school district. Whichever path you choose to take, make sure that your announcer's dialogue is well researched and factual. Feel free to call the USAS office for tips on researching. (A sample script can be found in the appendix.)

Guerilla Theater

Using guerilla theater tactics can be a lot of fun. This can take a number of forms. Guerilla Theater needs a lot of planning, but only needs a few people. Street theater is one option, where participants stand outside your school or in a high-traffic common area inside the school, and act out a scene or scenes, which portray some aspect of sweatshop abuse (see demonstrations/rallies below). Guerilla theater can also take much more subtle forms. For example, you could send two people into a store pretending to be shoppers. They can find an aisle/rack around which a lot of people are gathered. One person could pick up an item and say something to the affect of, "Wow, this shirt was made in Indonesia, I heard that workers in Indonesia only make \$0.24 an hour." You can then proceed to have a conversation about

sweatshop labor, and at the end decide not to buy the product, (even though it looked cute). The key here is to be really loud so the people around you have no choice but to eavesdrop. Some people may even come up to you and ask questions. Be sure you always have information (flyers, contact info, etc.) on you to share. If your school doesn't have a store that sells clothes, this activity might not work as easily, but you could certainly adapt it. If you are required to wear school uniforms, and your uniform supplier has a store, you could utilize this tactic in the supplier's store.

Another tactic would be to go into the store dressed as a manager or school administrator and strike up conversations with customers about where items were made and the conditions under which they were manufactured. This tactic is likely to get you kicked out of a store more quickly. Management does have a right to kick you out of their store because the store is private property, so don't argue about your rights. Unless you want to risk arrest, just leave. It is always good to have a number of people on hand so that they can go in after you are kicked out. It's also good to have a number of people in the store at the same time. Management gets scared when they think you are everywhere and they can't find all of you!

Anti-Sweatshop Christmas Carols

The holiday season is a great time to engage in anti-sweatshop activities, because it is when consumers spend the most money and companies make the most money. A great, and fun activity is to go Christmas caroling outside of classrooms or the houses of school administrators. (Be careful if you're doing this inside your school-you could get in a lot of trouble for disrupting class periods.) There are some great anti-sweatshop carols online. (Check out www.laborheritage.org for some examples. A basic internet search will generally bring up some clever ones as well).

Demonstrations/Rallies

Demonstrations are generally the most visible form of corporate anti-sweatshop activities, and they certainly draw the most media attention. However, they shouldn't be the first activity that is undertaken. (An escalation of activities and tactics is central to any good campaign.) In order to have a successful demonstration, you first need to do some research. If you are going to attempt a demonstration in front of (or inside) your school or a school board meeting, you've got to research your school district's demonstration policy (if they have one). Generally, sidewalks are fair game, but every town has its own rules on protesting. Sometimes a gathering of 20 people may simply be illegal. You may also be able to get a permit from your town to do a legal demonstration. That may allow you to set up a stage, music, and a place for demonstrators to stand. It is your responsibility to let people know what they're getting themselves into. You need to know if it is an illegal action or not, so do all of the research before you begin publicizing. You don't want to have a lot of people getting arrested if they weren't prepared for the possibility. You could very easily lose their support, and the support of others who were previously sympathetic. It also provides good ammunition for the administration to use against you to destroy your credibility and derail your campaign.

Once you have decided where your action is going to be, you should pick a date and time. It is preferable to do this type of action while the school is crowded or there is some type of special event going on. Your demonstration should include speakers, chants, petitions, and leaflets. Large visual aids are also important. Big signs (with messages that are quick to read and easy to understand), people in costumes, and puppets, are often used. Music is also great to listen

up a demonstration. A band, one or two people with drums or noisemakers (even if they are overturned water jugs or soda cans filled with beans), or even a radio, can really have an uplifting affect on the atmosphere of a demonstration. For speakers, you could have a few members of your group speak, a former or current employee of one of the companies producing for your school, a representative from a local union, or even a teacher with some expertise.

Once you have the location, time, and speakers, you should type up a press release and send it to your local media outlets. (See sample press release in appendix.) At the time of the rally, provide all participants with a list of chants, so that you can all chant in unison at a given time. Some great chants can be found online (one again, check out the resources section of this manual). You should also have plenty of information for people walking by to take. You want to make it as easy as possible for people to get informed and involved, so bring plenty of petitions. You should have people designated to stand on the perimeter of the rally and hand out information, gather petition signatures, and talk to curious bystanders. You should also have a couple of people designated as marshals to help keep the rally orderly, and make sure that nothing gets out of hand. It would be good to borrow/purchase a bullhorn for the speakers and the people designated to help lead chants. However, if you have a permitted rally you may be able to set up a microphone/sound system. It is also fun to have musical or spoken-word performances between speakers and chanting.

You may wish to have a few people engaged in a street theater activity as part of the demonstration. They can be dressed up as either supervisors or workers and can act out a skit illustrating sweatshop abuses. You can create your own skit, or try to find one online. (For example, a number of university groups protesting abuses at the New Era Cap Company factory in Derby, NY in 2002 held mock baseball games on their campuses, in which students dressed as managers and some dressed as workers. The managers cheated and won the game by a very large margin. At the same time, other students handed out informational flyers and gathered petition signatures.) Another option is to include an Anti-Sweatshop Fashion Show as part of your demonstration. Remember, you want to make it fun as well as educational. At the end of the rally you may wish to deliver the petitions, along with a letter, to your target administrator. He/she (or security acting on his/her behalf) may not let you inside at first. It's a good idea to designate two people to make this delivery, and make it clear that only these two people are attempting to enter the building (or meeting, whatever the case may be). The other people can stand outside until they are let in.

Sweat-Free Campus Campaign Case Studies

Case Study: Albuquerque Academy (2002):

The Albuquerque Academy anti-sweatshop group “Sweatstop” formed three years ago. With the help of an enthusiastic and informed media studies teacher, two students started a group that met weekly Tuesday mornings. The first year, we focused on informing ourselves about the conditions and causes of sweatshops. We read *No Logo* by Naomi Klein. We discussed each chapter and also debated some of the issues that came up such as globalization, anti-sweatshop solutions and what it means to be an anti-sweatshop activist. That year, we also attempted to get our bookstore to stock only “sweat-free” clothing, in which we were somewhat successful.

The next year, the teacher that had originally helped us start the group left the school, so we were kind of on our own. We had elected three students to run the group and we found a new sponsor. That year, we were a lot more proactive. We recruited a couple more students to participate. We took over a bulletin board in one of the main halls and on it we had a question and answer poster board, a comment board, articles, and pictures. We also held weekly lunch meetings where we would read an article before lunch and then debate about it at lunch. We encouraged everyone to come, especially those who disagreed with us, because it helped us to defend and understand our position better. We made a short presentation on sweatshops to an ethics class, followed by a question and answer session.

However, the big project last year was a trip to Nogales, Mexico. We took 25 students and 5 teachers to Mexico through a program called Borderlinks. When there we toured a factory, spoke with maquiladora workers and had a conversation about border economics with Kiko, the head of Borderlinks. We videotaped a lot during that trip. Following the trip, we made a presentation about it to the whole school. We also went to two other high schools and made presentations there. That trip was amazing for all of us because it really opened our eyes to the reality of sweatshops.

The only things I can say in retrospect about our group was that we really didn’t have the information available to us that the colleges have. Our group worked purely independent of national USAS, not because we wanted to, but because we really didn’t know what was going on outside of Albuquerque. I wish that we could have known about the list serves and have spoken to active college chapters, and possibly have them mentor us. However, there is a lot that can be done within a high school that can prepare you for the college activism scene. It all starts with awareness.

Case Study: Youth Organizers! (YO!) Minneapolis South High School (2002):

YO! or Youth Organizers (on child labor and sweatshops) is based at the Resource Center of the Americas, and is made up mostly of high school students. Right now, we are working on a campaign called “Sweat-Free Schools,” through which we are trying to get the Minneapolis Public School District to agree to go “sweat-free,” i.e., buy apparel and sports equipment from companies that allow their workers to unionize. We are also working on expanding this project to other areas besides Minneapolis, to the twin Cities metro and other areas. The more school districts in the country who sign on to this agreement, the more difficult it will be for companies

to deny their employees their rights. Our objective is to have the companies that exploit their workers sign a "code of conduct," laying out ground rules that would force them either to grant more rights to their employees or lose our business. Right now, we are trying to get the Minneapolis Public School board to sign a resolution that would get the sweat-free schools campaign plan into action. The school board is still talking about passing the resolution and will vote on it November 26th. We feel positive about the board's reactions at our last meeting. YO! also gives presentations, mostly around the Twin Cities metro area, educating both children and adults about the problems faced by sweatshop workers and child laborers, and spreading the word about the Sweat-Free Schools campaign.

Ward Melville High School, Setauket, NY (2002):

In the fall of 1998, the Human Rights Task Force took over the Amnesty International Club at the Ward Melville High School in Setauket, NY. This high school is part of the Three Village Central School District on Long Island, New York. Early on, the Human Rights Task Force decided to work on the issue of sweatshop labor. During the holiday season that year, students set up a table in their high school commons with information about sweatshop labor gotten from the People's Right to Know Campaign of the National Labor Committee. Included with this information were cards for students to fill out and send to companies such as Wal-Mart, as well as cards to give store managers as they purchased items during the holiday season. These cards expressed the student's (consumer's) desire to know about the conditions under which the products they were purchasing were manufactured.

Throughout the rest of the school year, members of the Ward Melville High School Human Rights Task Force became increasingly involved in the Long Island Students for Peace and Justice (LISPJ). This group was made up largely of college students from across Long Island who were working on several issues, including the issue of sweatshop labor. Many of these students were members of United Students Against Sweatshops chapters on their campuses, and decided to create a new network focused solely on the issue of sweatshop labor. Thus, the Long Island Anti-Sweatshop Organizing Network (LIASON) was formed. Ward Melville High School students attended a few formational meetings, but then decided to focus on their own campaign, and figure out how to organize on a high school level.

Learning from their college counterparts, the high school students learned of sweat-free school campaigns occurring on college campuses. They met throughout the summer and decided that the following school year would bring a new sweat-free school campaign to their high school. Originally wishing to model the campaign after college sweat-free campaigns, the students looked to their college friends for guidance, and soon realized that they need to design a campaign unlike the ones being undertaken at the college level. They were unsure how to begin, and consulted their club advisor for help. Fortunately, their timing was right. Their club advisor told them of a statewide initiative dealing with the issue of sweatshops. The New York State Labor Religion Coalition was promoting the use of sweat-free resolutions for all K-12 districts in New York State. These resolutions, once adopted by school boards, would mandate that all apparel purchased and licensed by the school district would not be manufactured under conditions that did not uphold the rights of workers.

A few weeks later, two students, accompanied by their club advisor, were able to attend a meeting sponsored by the New York State Labor Religion Coalition that sought to bring together representatives from school districts throughout the area. There they met teachers and administrators from several other districts on Long Island, as well as religious and community

leaders from their own area. They were the only students present at the meeting, making their student-led campaign unique. The New York State Labor Religion Coalition provided the students with a number of resources, including a sample resolution and guidance on how to proceed. They left the meeting empowered and excited.

As a first step, the students drafted a letter to the Director of Business for their school district, as well as to the superintendent and members of the school board, expressing their desire to have the school board adopt a sweat-free resolution. Immediately, the students began a school-wide educational campaign. At first, they put up large posters with slogans such as, “Who made your shoes?” Next, they contacted teachers in the English and Social Studies departments and requested half of a class period to make a presentation on the issue of sweatshop labor. A number of teachers responded, and the students were able to make upwards of 27 presentations in a two-month period. In these presentations, the students outlined the term sweatshop, the horrors of the sweatshop abuses, and showed part of the video Mickey Mouse Goes to Haiti about a Disney factory in Haiti. The students utilized a number of handouts and a petition as well. The students specifically highlighted the well-known brands Disney and Wal-Mart while making their presentations. The justification behind this decision was the fact that Wal-Mart is one of the largest, if not the largest retailer worldwide. The students chose to target Disney because they found incredible hypocrisy in the fact that Disney’s target audience is children, at the same time that it abuses child labor. During each presentation the students invited their fellow students to come to the Human Rights Task Force meetings and to join them at an upcoming school board meeting. Additionally, a few students went to their junior high school and made a presentation to one of the community service clubs. Through this, they were able to get even more support, as the junior high students were very interested in the campaign and eager to help. The junior high students became an integral part of the campaign, garnering their own faculty and student support and attending school board meetings.

As the time approached to present at a school board meeting, the students stepped up their publicity campaign and attempted to get as many people to join them at the meeting as they possibly could. They went to a number of local religious and community groups and asked them to pass resolutions in support of the district sweat-free schools resolution. A few organizations passed such resolutions and wrote letters to the school board to show their support. Students also began to hand out leaflets in the hallways of their school inviting students to come to the school board meeting, and went to the student government to gain further support. In addition, the students had one of their friends from Long Island Students for Peace and Justice make buttons with the slogan “Sweat – Free 3V” (for the Three Village School District). Supporters wore these buttons when they attended school board meetings, as a visible display of their solidarity.

On the night of the first board meeting that the students attended, two students went before the school board’s public session, outlined their issue and stated their demand. (It should be noted that prior to this meeting, the students sent each member of the school board a letter, a sample resolution, and copies of the petitions. Therefore, the school board members were already aware of the issue.) Behind the two speakers, between 30 and 40 students, faculty members, community members, and parents stood up, wearing their buttons, to show their support. When the students were finished, they turned around to a room full of people standing and applauding for their cause. (In their nervousness, they hadn’t noticed that their supporters were standing behind them, so this was an extremely surprising and empowering moment.)

For the rest of that school year, the school board continued to stall on voting. Every time it was stated that the issue would come up for discussion or voting, the students, community members, parents, and faculty would show up in full force to the meeting. Most of the members of the school board were in support of the resolution, but there was some resistance. At the last time the school board was scheduled to vote that school year, the issue was tabled once again. The district's lawyers were afraid to adopt a resolution due to a clause New York State law, which stated that the district had to purchase from the "lowest responsible bidder." The students had asserted that any company that utilized sweatshop labor was not responsible. However, the lawyers fear was enough to stay the vote.

(It should be noted that throughout this time, the students became involved in a corporate anti-sweatshop campaign as well. At the time a USAS member from Yale University made efforts to connect to high school groups. With her help, the students were able to participate in coordinated actions against Nike. The students collected petition signatures and letters to Phil Knight, Nike's CEO. Additionally, the students organized a field trip to an anti-sweatshop rally/march in New York City, which targeted stores such as Disney, the GAP, and Nike. Through this, the students were able to make the connection between large corporations abusing sweatshop labor, and their very own school not being willing to become sweat-free.)

Over the next year and a half, students (although the original leaders of the campaign had graduated) continued to be in communication with the superintendent and the members of the school board. Even some of those students who had graduated kept on top of the campaign, wrote letters, and came back for school board meetings. Attending numerous other school board meetings and engaging in continuous letter writing, the students pressed on, although often discouraged.

Around March of 2002, New York State Governor George Pataki signed a new bill into law that would allow all public school districts to take into consideration working conditions when deciding whether or not to purchase from a specific vendor. The students, extremely excited by this new development, immediately brought it to the attention of the school board. After some more negotiation, the school board decided to pass the sweat-free resolution. The Three Village Central School District became the third district on Long Island to become sweat-free (at least that we know of). This campaign was the first student run campaign on Long Island. This district is now one of a growing number of school districts nationwide to pass such a resolution.

the national campus living wage campaign

Updated July 2005

What is a campus living wage campaign?

The people who make our schools run are routinely exploited: often, they face 90-hour work weeks divided among two or three jobs; they face days and months without seeing their children or spouses; they face medical emergencies without health care; and they face evictions and homelessness. No one should face these circumstances. Workers are fighting back, and we're there to support them. USAS began a national living wage campaign with our allies to support and coordinate student-supported campus worker struggles across the country. For USAS, a "living wage" campaign is defined as any struggle to ensure that workers on campus do not receive poverty wages, whatever the mechanism to remedy the exploitation – whether an organizing drive, a contract campaign, an effort to kick an egregious subcontractor off campus, or a campaign to win a wage floor that adjusts to the cost of living. And workers and students are winning living wage victories on dozens of campuses across the country, from Georgia to Connecticut to Indiana to California. Students and workers organizing together build powerful solidarity, and campus living wage campaigns to end poverty wages can be a moral force to resist the corporatization of education and the exploitation of workers.

Resources United Students Against Sweatshops can offer you:

- ★ Materials to do educational events on campus, such as videos, literature, and speakers.
- ★ Connections to labor and community organizations in your area who will be your allies in these campaigns, as well as connections to worker organizations around the world.
- ★ A whole network of students around the country who are running these campaigns and winning! USAS chapters have so much to offer each other in terms of strategy, advice, and student power.
- ★ Assistance from the charming and experienced USAS staff!
- ★ Let us know what else you need!

What schools are currently running campus living wage campaigns?

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA

University of California San Diego, San Diego, CA

Western Michigan University...and many more!

For more information, contact USAS at organize@usasnet.org

More on Campus Worker Solidarity Campaigns

It's very tempting to decide that you want to run a living wage campaign to raise the wages for workers on your campus. But, you have to remember that the first rule to organizing for worker rights is that you must be organizing in solidarity with workers already organizing for their rights. It is never up to you to tell workers what they need or what they should be fighting for. No one knows the most pressing issues in any given workplace better than the workers themselves.

The first step to a campus worker solidarity campaign is to talk to the workers on your campus. You probably see/speak to these workers almost daily. There are cafeteria workers, groundskeepers, janitors, and maybe other staff such as paraprofessionals and hall monitors. Teachers may also be engaged in a struggle against the superintendent or school board. Start by saying hi and asking how their day is going. Once you build up a bit of a relationship you can start asking more probing questions like what they think of their job or whether they belong to a union. Other tactics that students have employed is hosting a worker appreciation day and handing out flowers (real or tissue paper) to workers with a little note saying that your student organization appreciates their hard work in keeping your school running; or a worker breakfast/lunch/dinner where students provide the food and create an opportunity for students and workers to get to know each other a little bit better.

Students do many different things to stand in solidarity with workers on their campus. Sometimes, they run living wage campaigns in order to set a higher wage standard; sometimes they support workers organizing a new union or fighting for a new union contract; other times students will help workers fight for better healthcare and benefit packages or educational credits to send workers' children to the school. Students are in a unique position to stand in solidarity with school employees because you see them every day, and because you can do things on your campus that they cannot do because of a very real fear of being fired. The campaign you undertake will depend on the situation of the workers at your school and what their issues are. Whatever campaign you run, be sure that you are always following the lead of workers, and not the other way around. Workers must be involved in every aspect of the campaign and always know what you are planning.

campaigns to demand ethical contracting policies

Updated July 2005

What is an ethical purchasing policy?

Through years of activism, USAS has helped revolutionize global garment production and bring workers' rights to the forefront of licensing deals. Now, the surge of multinational corporations and the increased globalization of production have created a situation in which the manufacturers of many different products are facing the same atrocious conditions, poverty wages, and health and safety violations that plague the global garment industry. Campaigns to demand ethical purchasing policies work to ensure that all products purchased by our educational institutions are manufactured under conditions that respect the basic rights of workers. This includes everything from computers and vending machines to food products and furniture. These campaigns have taken many forms; some USAS affiliates have pressured their administrations to adopt ethical purchasing guidelines (similar to the codes of conduct originally adopted under the Sweat-Free Campus Campaign), while other schools have chosen to target specific companies (such as Coca-Cola in response to violent union busting in Colombia, and Taco Bell due to the egregious violation of the rights of its agricultural workers in Immokalee, Florida). The latter campaigns most often include demanding that schools stop doing business with these abusive employers. USAS students across the country are currently working hard to flush out national and local strategies in order to make this campaign more coordinated and successful.



Resources United Students Against Sweatshops can offer you:

- ★ Materials to do educational events at your school, such as videos, literature, and speakers.
- ★ An organizing manual to help you formulate campaign strategy.
- ★ Connections to labor and community organizations in your area that will be your allies in these campaigns, as well as connections to worker organizations around the world.
- ★ A whole network of students around the country who are running these campaigns and winning! USAS chapters have so much to offer each other in terms of strategy, advice, and student power.
- ★ Assistance from the charming and experienced USAS staff!
- ★ Let us know what else you need!

What schools are currently running ethical purchasing campaigns?

University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA
 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
 Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY
 DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois
 University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Amherst, MA
 Macalester University, St. Paul, MN

For more information, contact USAS at organize@usasnet.org

Unthinkable! Undrinkable! A Campus Campaign Overview

The materials in this packet are designed to help student activists launch campaigns demanding that Coca-Cola stop its abusive treatment of workers and communities in the global economy.

Why Target Coca-Cola?

Coca-Cola is one of the world's most powerful and profitable corporations. In 2004, Coca-Cola earned \$4.85 billion in profits. Yet, despite repeated pleas for help, Coca-Cola has not found the time or resources to insure the most basic safety of the workers who bottle its products or prevent massive environmental devastation in the communities where it does business. Coca-Cola has responded by launching public relations campaigns and denying responsibility- it's time we show them that they need to actually change things on the ground- enough is enough!

Death Squads in Colombia

Colombia has long been the most dangerous country in the world to organize a union. Since 1986, roughly 4000 Colombian trade unionists have been murdered. In 2000, three of every five trade unionists killed in the world were Colombian. The vast majority of these murders have been carried out by right-wing paramilitary groups (aka death squads) on an ideological mission to destroy the labor movement. These groups often work in collaboration with the official U.S.-supported Colombian military, and in some instances with managers at plants producing for multinational corporations. In the case of Coca-Cola, according to numerous credible reports, the company and its business partners have turned a blind eye to, financially supported, and actively colluded with paramilitary groups in efforts to destroy workers' attempts to organize unions and bargain collectively.

- ★ Since 1989, eight union leaders from Coca-Cola plants have been murdered by paramilitary forces. Dozens of other workers have been intimidated, kidnapped, or tortured.
- ★ In Carepa, members of the paramilitary murdered union leader Isidro Gil in broad daylight inside his factory's gates. They returned the next day and forced all of the plant's workers to resign from their union by signing documents on Coca-Cola letterhead.
- ★ The most recent murder attempt occurred on August 22, 2003, when two men riding motorcycles fired shots at Juan Carlos Galvis, a worker leader at Coca-Cola's Barrancabermeja plant.
- ★ There is substantial evidence that managers of several bottling plants have ordered assaults to occur and made regular payments to leaders of the paramilitary groups carrying out the attacks.

These ongoing abuses have taken their toll on Coca-Cola workers' efforts to organize. Their union, SINALTRAINAL, has suffered a dramatic loss in membership, as worker leaders are intimidated or forced into hiding. SINALTRAINAL has appealed for solidarity and allies in the U.S. labor and social justice movements have answered their call. The United Steelworkers and the International Labor Rights Fund have filed a lawsuit against Coca-Cola on behalf of the union and victims' families in U.S. federal court. Other unions including the Teamsters and many community groups have launched public campaigns targeting Coke.

What are workers in Colombia demanding?

- ★ Acknowledge Underlying Facts. The events alleged in the four Complaints filed in federal district court in Miami, Florida are objectively verifiable. For example, Mr. Isidro Gil was murdered in the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Carepa. The Plaintiffs are extremely distraught that Coca-Cola's public statements have labeled these allegations as "false" since this constitutes an effort to alter the historical record.
- ★ Public Statements Denouncing Anti-Union Violence. Coca-Cola and Panamco/FEMSA should issue strong, public statements throughout the press in Colombia and in the world denouncing violence, and particularly anti-union violence, by all armed actors in Colombia. The companies should state that such violence, regardless of who commits it, is seen by corporations such as themselves as being bad for business and investment. Specifically, they should publicly state that if the paramilitaries see themselves as protecting the interests of domestic and foreign investment, they are wrong; that their violent conduct, especially against trade unionists, is bad for business and investment and must cease. Coca-Cola and Panamco/FEMSA must also make public statements in the press indicating their belief that, contrary to the statements made by local Colombian management, Sinaltrainal is not connected with any armed groups in Colombia, and acknowledge that the violent acts described in the four federal complaints was unlawful.
- ★ Human Rights Committee. Coca-Cola and Panamco/FEMSA must agree to support the creation of an independent committee to which workers can submit complaints about anti-union violence and intimidation at or around any Coca-Cola bottling plant. The Committee will work with such employees and the union to address such concerns in a productive way.
- ★ Investigation and Training: Coca-Cola and Panamco/FEMSA must encourage the proper authorities in Colombia to investigate links between local Colombian management and the armed groups, particularly the paramilitaries. Further, the companies must conduct their own internal investigations and remove management with such links. This investigation must be subject to independent review. Coca-Cola and Panamco/FEMSA should also conduct training with all management personnel and employees in which they strongly stress that any collusion with armed actors or any encouragement of anti-union violence by these actors, whether material or moral, will not be tolerated and will result in immediate discharge.
- ★ Address Anti-Union Impact of Violence. As a consequence of the anti-union violence that is the subject of the four legal cases, SINALTRAINAL has suffered significant losses of members and other institutional damage. In order to address this distinct aspect of the violence, Coca-Cola must agree to require its bottlers to negotiate with SINALTRAINAL and to agree to a process to repair the damage suffered by SINALTRAINAL. This shall include prohibiting any of the Coca-Cola bottlers from referring to the union in a derogatory way, such as calling it a "guerilla union," reinstating union members who fled following specific death threats from paramilitaries or who were discharged unlawfully for their union activity, and allowing SINALTRAINAL to have access to workers prior to elections in any of the subject bottling plants where SINALTRAINAL was decertified following the acts of violence due to lost membership from terror and intimidation.

- ★ Cessation of Criminal Charges. Coca-Cola and Panamco/FEMSA must stop pressing criminal legal action against the Plaintiffs as they have done since shortly after, and in retaliation for, the Plaintiffs' commencement of the civil human rights lawsuit in Miami.
- ★ Compensation for Victims

Environmental Devastation in India (selections from indiaresource.org)

Communities across India are under assault from Coca-Cola practices in the country. A pattern has emerged as a result of Coca-Cola's bottling operations in India.

- ★ Communities across India living around Coca-Cola's bottling plants are experiencing severe water shortages, directly as a result of Coca-Cola's massive extraction of water from the common groundwater resource. The wells have run dry and the hand water pumps do not work any more. Studies, including one by the Central Ground Water Board in India, have confirmed the significant depletion of the water table.
- ★ When the water is extracted from the common groundwater resource by digging deeper, the water smells and tastes strange. Coca-Cola has been indiscriminately discharging its waste water into the fields around its plant and sometimes into rivers, including the Ganges, in the area. The result has been that the groundwater has been polluted as well as the soil. Public health authorities have posted signs around wells and hand pumps advising the community that the water is unfit for human consumption.
- ★ In two communities, Plachimada and Mehdiganj, Coca-Cola was distributing its solid waste to farmers in the area as "fertilizer". Tests conducted by the BBC found cadmium and lead in the waste, effectively making the waste toxic waste. Coca-Cola stopped the practice of distributing its toxic waste only when ordered to do so by the state government.
- ★ Tests conducted by a variety of agencies, including the government of India, confirmed that Coca-Cola products contained high levels of pesticides, and as a result, the Parliament of India has banned the sale of Coca-Cola in its cafeteria. However, Coca-Cola not only continues to sell drinks laced with poisons in India (that could never be sold in the US and EU), it is also introducing new products in the Indian market. And as if selling drinks with DDT and other pesticides to Indians was not enough, one of Coca-Cola's latest bottling facilities to open in India, in Ballia, is located in an area with a severe contamination of arsenic in its groundwater.

Destroying Lives, Livelihoods and Communities

Water shortages, pollution of groundwater and soil, exposure to toxic waste and pesticides is having impacts of massive proportions in India. In a country where over 70% of the population makes a living related to agriculture, stealing the water and poisoning the water and soil is a sure recipe for disaster. Thousands of farmers in India have been affected by Coca-Cola's practices, and Coca-Cola is guilty of destroying the livelihoods of thousands of people in India.

Unfortunately, we do not even know the extent of the damage as a result from exposure to the toxic waste and pesticides as these are long term problems. Most affected are the marginalized communities such as the Adivasis (Indigenous People's) and Dalits (formerly untouchables), as well as the low-income communities, landless agricultural workers and women. Taken in its entirety, that's a lot of people in India.

The Struggles

The arrogance of Coca-Cola in India is not going unanswered. In fact, the growing opposition to Coca-Cola- primarily from Coca-Cola affected communities- has spread so rapidly and gained so much strength that Coca-Cola is now on the defensive.

Kala Dera, Rajasthan

In the state of Rajasthan, the High Court ruled in November 2004 that all soft drinks in the state must state the level of pesticides on the product label, in addition to the ingredients. This unprecedented ruling came only three weeks after a 2,000 strong demonstration to shut down the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Kala Dera, on the outskirts of Jaipur in Rajasthan. Over 50 villages are experiencing water shortages as a result of Coca-Cola's indiscriminate mining of water, and "struggle committees" have been formed in at least 32 villages to confront Coca-Cola's abuses.

The Central Ground Water Board, a government agency, not only confirmed the declining water table as a result of Coca-Cola's indiscriminate mining of the water, it also faulted Coca-Cola for creating "ecological imbalances" in the area.

In response to the court order to state the level of pesticides on their labels, Coca-Cola appealed the decision on the grounds that such an action would force them to compromise with their "commercial confidentiality"! Coca-Cola also submitted to the court that small traces of DDT and other pesticides are not harmful "to the health of the consumers." The court rejected the appeal, and significantly, stated that "commercial interests are subservient to fundamental rights."

Plachimada, Kerala

The single largest Coca-Cola bottling plant in India, in Plachimada, Kerala, remains shut down since March 2004. Initially ordered to shut down until June 15 (for arrival of monsoon rains) by the state government to ease drought conditions, the Plachimada bottling plant has been unable to open because the local village council (panchayat) is REFUSING to reissue Coca-Cola a license to operate. The village council has maintained that the plant needs to shut down because it has destroyed the water system in the area as well as polluted the area. The panchayat is an elected body at the most local level in India, and forms the building block of democracy in India - Panchayat Raj- a model promoted extensively by Mahatma Gandhi. Coca-Cola, in typical fashion, has chosen to undermine democracy by appealing to the courts that the panchayat has no jurisdiction over the plant and Coca-Cola, and that it should be the state of Kerala that makes the decision. Coca-Cola's efforts to undermine local governance is being followed closely as the court ruling in favor of the panchayat could set a significant precedence for local governance.

The struggle in Plachimada is the oldest struggle against Coca-Cola in India and there has been a 24/7 vigil directly in front of the factory gates since April 22, 2002. The struggle in Plachimada has also enjoyed significant victories. In December 2003, the High court, in an extremely significant decision, ruled that Coca-Cola HAD to seek alternative sources of water and that it could extract only as much water from the common groundwater resource as a farmer owning 34 acres of land could. The justification being that the plant is located on 34 acres. Furthermore, the court held that the groundwater belonged to the people and the Government had no right to allow a private party to extract such a huge quantity of ground water which was "a property held by it in trust".

In another significant action in August, 2004, the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (PCB), acting upon a Supreme court order, directed the Coca-Cola company to ensure that water supply through pipeline is delivered to the houses of all the affected communities in the vicinity.

While the various court and government agencies are validating and acting upon the community concerns, Coca-Cola is busy putting more money into a public relations strategy designed to convince everyone that they have nothing to do with the water scarcity and pollution in Plachimada and in India.

Mehdiganj, Uttar Pradesh

More so than other struggles against Coca-Cola in India, the communities in Mehdiganj, a village about 20 kms from the holy city of Varanasi, have more of an uphill battle because the local and state officials are turning a blind eye to the concerns of the communities. The water table has declined between 25-40 feet in the last four years, and Coca-Cola has been discharging its waste water into the surrounding fields, and now into a canal that feeds into the river Ganges, a holy river for millions of Indian. The landscape is very rural, and farming is the main source of livelihood in the area. Many farmers have yet to be compensated for the land that was taken from them in order to build the Coca-Cola bottling facility. The movement to shut down the Coca-Cola plant has been growing rapidly for the last year.

In August 2003, community members entered the office of the Regional Pollution Control Board in Varanasi, and to protest their inaction, dumped sacks full of sludge from the Coca-Cola plant on the table of the regional officer. In September 2003, over 500 people marched to the Coca-Cola factory gates and were physically attacked and beaten by police and private security guards. In October 2003, a march was organized from the Coke plant in Mehdiganj to a Pepsi plant in Jaunpur, about 150 km away. And in mid-December 2003, ten activists went on a five-day hunger strike in front of the plant. They were supported by fifty people sitting with them each day, and about 300 people went on hunger strikes of varied duration. And in June 2004, hundreds conducted a sit-in in front of the state assembly in Lucknow. So far, not only have the authorities not cooperated at all, they have consistently refused to make good on their promises of inquiries and investigations to look into Coca-Cola's practices that are depleting the groundwater and polluting the water and soil. In addition, the authorities have trumped up criminal charges against some of the key leaders of the struggle, and issued orders to these leaders preventing them from "shouting slogans or making inflammatory speeches ... within 300 meters of the plant". The communities are determined to close down the factory in Mehdiganj, and the local organizers have been extremely successful in garnering local support in the area. They have also organized the community around a new Coca-Cola plant in Balia, about 250 kms away.

From November 15-24, 2004, a march will be conducted from the Coca-Cola factory gates in Balia to the Coca-Cola factory gates in Mehdiganj, demanding the closure of both the facilities. What are communities in India demanding? The first step that Coca-Cola must take is to admit to the severity of problems it has caused in India, and then find ways to address them operationally:

- ★ They must permanently shut down the bottling facilities in Mehdiganj, Kala Dera and Plachimada.
- ★ They must compensate the affected community members.
- ★ They must recharge the depleted groundwater
- ★ They must clean up the contaminated water and soil.

- ★ They must ensure that workers laid off as a result of Coca-Cola's negligence are retrained and relocated in a more sustainable industry.
- ★ They must admit liability for the long term consequences of exposure to toxic waste and pesticide laden drinks in India.

What Can Students Do?

As students, we have a great deal of power to pressure Coca-Cola to stop its abuses. This is true for at least two reasons. First, as anyone who has seen Coke's TV commercials and advertisements may have noticed, Coca-Cola views young people, and particularly students, as its highest priority demographic target. To the company, young people are potential "customers for life" – if they can win our loyalty before their competitors do. Thus, young people hold more sway than we might think when we publicly attack the company's image and spread the message to our peers.

Second, students have a powerful leverage over Coca-Cola through our universities. As we have found with collegiate licensed apparel, food and beverage companies like Coca-Cola are eager to develop relationships with universities, both to access a profitable institutional market and associate itself with the prestige of colleges and universities. In the past several years, Coca-Cola has stepped up its efforts to negotiate major contracts with universities. These contracts go beyond simply installing vending machines on campuses to include sponsorship of sports teams and unique marketing relationships. For example, Rutgers University, had a ten year contract with Coca-Cola that, among other things, let the company create specially designed Rutgers-themed vending machines and marketing materials. The university had received a million dollars a year in return from Coca-Cola. In May 2005 after a two year campaign around Coke's human rights abuses, Rutgers did not renew the contract and removed all Coke products from its campus.

Getting Started

These factors can give students real leverage over the company. There are many tangible things students can do to get started.

- ★ **Spread the Word:** Organize a campus or community video screening and dialogue about Coke and human rights in Colombia/environmental abuse in India. There are several excellent videos available, including State of the Union. Contact the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke for a copy. There are also some terrific speakers on this issue who will be happy to make presentations, including Colombian workers and union leaders who are currently touring the U.S as well as representatives from the affected Indian communities. For details, contact the people listed at the end of this document.
- ★ **Take a Stand at Coca-Cola Events and Presentations:** Coca-Cola representatives are constantly speaking at colleges and universities and sponsoring school events. Keep an eye out – these are terrific opportunities for letting the company know we're out here. When the Coca-Cola representatives return to headquarters and have to report that their recruitment or marketing events were ruined because everyone in the audience was holding flyers about the company's environmental practices in India or because students kept asking questions about murders in Colombia, you can be sure that higher-ups will take notice.
- ★ **Target Coca-Cola Through Your Universities and High Schools:** As mentioned, Coca-Cola has negotiated contracts with hundreds of colleges, universities and high schools

throughout the country. Indeed, most campuses have a contract with Coca-Cola or Pepsi or both. These contracts range from simple arrangements to sell Coca-Cola on campus to elaborate sponsorship or trademark licensing arrangements. Coca-Cola is of course very sensitive to the concerns of its large institutional business partners. Thus, these contracts represent an incredible source of leverage if you can get your campus to pressure Coca-Cola or reconsider its contract with the company.

Here are some simple steps to get started.

1. **Find the Contract:** The quickest way to find out if your campus has a contract with Coca-Cola is simply by walking around and noticing if there are Coca-Cola vending machines, fountains, or other signs on campus property. If there are, you've got a contract. The agency on campus that holds the contract/s varies from campus to campus – they are often held by housing and dining services, athletics departments, trademark licensing offices, or special self-contained agencies called “auxiliaries.” You might start by asking the head of dining services what he or she knows. If you've had dealings with administrators through an anti-sweatshop policy, those contacts may be useful as well.
2. **Identify the Contract's Basic Provisions:** Once you have established the agency on campus that holds the contract, find out as much about it as you can. Ask for a copy of the contract from whichever campus agency holds it. (In some cases, this may take some persistent phone calls.) But if you cannot get a hold of the contract, just try to find out as much about it as you can. Find out how much money the contract is worth, and if the arrangement allows Coca-Cola to use of the university's name or logo or promote itself through university sports programs or other public events – this can be useful because it raises issues related to campus anti-sweatshop policies. (Again, you may be able find this out simply by walking around campus.)
3. **Have Your Student Government Pass a Resolution:** With a basic knowledge of the university's relationship to Coca-Cola, you're ready to start making noise. A good way to get started is by asking your student government to pass a resolution of concern. At many colleges and universities, passing a resolution is very easy to do and requires minimal work. Be sure to include as a resolve in the resolution that your student government will formally ask that your school take seriously its commitment to upholding human rights by reconsidering its business ties to Coca-Cola. If you can, include references to the specific nature of your school's contract and, if applicable, language referring to your school's anti-sweatshop policy as a precedent for taking action regarding these issues. Two sample resolutions are included in this packet – from UC Berkeley and Hofstra. Remember to notify the campus and community newspapers before the resolution passes – it could be a great hook for an article.
4. **Encourage university administrators to cut existing contracts or not renew contracts with Coca-Cola in light of its human rights record in Colombia and environmental abuses in India:** While Coca-Cola may not care to listen to individual students, the company is definitely going to take concerns raised by campus administrators seriously – these are their true business partners and there is real money at stake. Arrange for a meeting with administrators to present your resolution and begin a serious dialogue about the school's contract with Coca-Cola. The shape of this dialogue will vary from campus to campus. If the

contract is not yet completed or is soon up for renewal, you may propose that the school condition its relationship with Coca-Cola on the company's human rights practices and make decisions accordingly. If your campus is in the middle of a long term contract with Coca-Cola, you may argue that Coca-Cola is now in violation of university protocols and that the university should immediately make appropriate changes to its relationship with Coca-Cola. Whatever the situation, the overriding message is simple:

- ★ It is our duty to make sure that the companies that our university does business with, and loans our name to, act responsibly and respect basic human rights.
- ★ To keep the university's business, Coca-Cola needs to stop the violence against its workers and agree to participate in an independent inquiry of its practices.

Getting your campus administrators to make a bold decision to reconsider the contract with Coca-Cola will require persuasive lobbying as well as pressure, and it will take time and creativity. It can be useful to bring sympathetic faculty and elected student leaders to meet with administrators. Petitions representing individual students or organizations can help demonstrate support for your position. Think also of creative ways to attract media attention – perhaps by performing “guerilla theatre” plays or writing letters to the editor. Anything you do will likely pay off.

As a most minimal and preliminary step, ask a relevant and sympathetic administrator to write a letter of concern to Coca-Cola about its human rights practices in Colombia and environmental abuses in India. The letter should make a specific request for information and follow-up, asking for a meeting with a Coca-Cola representative.

- ★ Some schools that have already removed Coca-Cola products from their campus:

Bard College	Rutgers University
Carleton College	Salem State College
College of DuPage	St. Peter's Prep, New Jersey
Lake Forest College	Union Theological Seminary
Oberlin College	

- ★ Some schools that are currently campaigning to remove Coca-Cola products from campus:

American University	New York University
Amherst College	Smith College
DePaul University	Swarthmore College
Hofstra University	University of California
Indiana University	University of Illinois
Macalester College	University of Michigan

Further Resources:

The following websites provide current and in-depth information on the Coca-Cola campaign and related issues:

- ★ United Students Against Sweatshops: www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org
- ★ Campaign to Stop Killer Coke: www.killercoke.org
- ★ CokeWatch: www.cokewatch.org
- ★ CorpWatch: www.corpwatch.org
- ★ International Labor Rights Fund: www.laborrights.org
- ★ United Steel Workers of America: www.uswa.org
- ★ Colombia Watch: www.colombiawatch.org
- ★ U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project: www.usleap.org
- ★ Committee for Social Justice in Colombia: www.socialjusticecolombia.org
- ★ Health Gap Global Access Project: www.treat-your-workers.org

STRATEGY

Regardless of the campaign you choose to undertake, a good strategy is imperative. It is extremely important to plan out your campaign before you begin to take any action. You should outline your goals, your targets, and your tactics. While all campaigns change their course of action over time, it is essential to come up with a concrete and detailed plan of action. Make sure you take into account as many possible obstacles and brainstorm what you will do if these occur. The Midwest Academy and the United States Student Association (USSA) have put together a great chart to help you strategize. You can find this chart on the next two pages. You can also contact them at www.usstudents.org to have them come to a strategy training at your school.



Midwest Academy - GROW Strategy Chart

After choosing an issue, fill in this chart as a guide to developing a strategy. Be specific. List all the possibilities.

Constituents, Allies and Opponents

Goals

What are the long term goals of your campaign?

What is the intermediate goal for the campaign?
What specifically will constitute a victory?

What short term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your intermediate goal?

Organizational Considerations

Have:
In specific numbers, list the resources your organization brings to the campaign.

Want:
In the same terms, list the ways in which you want this campaign to strengthen your organization.

Problems:
List any internal organizational problems.

Opponents

Constituents:
Who cares about this issue enough to join in the campaign? Into what already existing groups are they organized?

Allies:
Which individuals will be willing and able to help your campaign but are not directly affected by the issue or cannot join your organization?

Opponents:
Who will actively organize against you?

Targets

Who has the power to give you what you want?

** Remember, a target is always a person or persons**

Is there a secondary target, or someone who has the power over your primary target? What power do you have over them?

Tactics

POWER: Must be directed at a specific target and demonstrate a specific form of power.

- Direct actions with target
- Public hearings
- Voter registration, education and turnout
- Strikes
- Letter writing

- Organizational/ Education:
Must build your organization and membership while raising awareness.
- Flyers/ chalking
 - Film screenings
 - Sign up sheets
 - Class announcements
 - Editorials

Strategy: USSA/ Midwest Academy
Revised 3/28/02 c Midwest Academy 2002

Midwest Academy * 28 E. Jackson Blvd. Suite 605 Chicago, IL 60604 * 312-427-2304 * www.midwestacademy.com
United States Student Association * 1413 K Street NW, 9th Floor Washington, DC 20005 * 202-347-USSA * www.usstudents.org



Midwest Academy - GROW Strategy Chart

After choosing your issue, fill in this chart as a guide to developing a strategy. Be specific. List all the possibilities.

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies and Opponents	Targets	Tactics
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Long Term: Have: Constituents: Organizational/ Education: Primary target(s):

Intermediate: Want: Allies: Secondary target(s):

Short Term: Problems: Opponents: Power:

Strategy: USSA/ Midwest Academy
Revised 3/28/02 c Midwest Academy 2002

Midwest Academy * 28 E. Jackson Blvd. Suite 605 Chicago, IL 60604 * 312-427-2304 * www.midwestacademy.com
United States Student Association * 1413 K Street NW, 9th Floor Washington, DC 20005 * 202-347-USSA * www.usstudents.org

Making your campaign happen on campus - Organize!

Where do I start?

So, you want to kick off your campaign to get your university or college to stop supporting sweatshops. It's going to take a grassroots student movement to do it. Here are some suggestions on getting started.

Outreach – Building the movement one student at a time.

You may be forming a USAS chapter, a subcommittee of an already existing labor solidarity or human rights group, or a coalition. Use existing campus networks to draw more students into the campaign. Put out some initial information over email listserves or progressive groups. Plan an information session or a mini teach-in.



Personal contact is the most basic and probably the best way to recruit people to a movement. Nothing replaces meeting someone, answering their questions, and spending time personally investing them in the campaign. When new students show interest, for example, by attending a meeting, call them afterward to see where they're at, why they're interested, and what they want to do to help the campaign. You can give them ideas of what they can do as well.

Contact USAS at (202) NO-SWEAT, or email organize@usasnet.org, to see if anyone else near your campus has expressed interest in the sweatshop campaign or labor rights in general.

Don't forget to:

Listen to the people you are trying to organize, let them tell you what they're interests are, and how you can interest them in this campaign. There's a different hook for each person who get involved, so relate.

Be persistent, some people who aren't interested or are "too busy" will become active if you keep talking to them (but stop short of the level of harassment that just pisses people off.)

Getting commitments from people to actually do things, either while you talk to them or soon after, gets them involved and hopefully interested in the campaign. It also gives them some sense that it's their thing too, and gives you a good reason to talk to them again as follow-up. Meet people where they're at and where their schedule's at as well.

Grassroots education and publicity – the keys for recruitment and building your campaign.

Visibility: people should know about your campaign even if they're completely oblivious to everything else happening on campus. Keep your message short and simple.

Language: avoid jargon.

Positivity: Do not just emphasize the horrors of sweatshops. Tell students what can and is being done about them.

Creativity: Colorful, visual, interactive, eye-catching publicity is more effective as long as it doesn't obscure your message.

Repetition: Use multiple means multiple times.

Reputation: Don't forget to include your organization's name on all your material and contact information.

Pride: To appeal to a broader student base, use school pride and spirit. ("The university should be a leader on and off the field.")

Focus: Keep your message focused on your campaign target. If you are beyond the general education part of the campaign, stay focused on your school's administration and their power/obligation to stop sweatshops.

Post flyers, set up information tables, leaflet in high-traffic areas, write guest editorials letters to the editor, op-eds, or put ads in your campus newspaper. Don't forget to include the meeting times of your groups in the campus calendar.

Check out local radio stations for call-in shows. You can also do "midnight redecorating," late night or early morning, where you can use disapproved-of methods for education (spraypaint, wheatpasting, pervasive stickers/labels). Wear symbols of support like armbands, ribbons, or buttons, and distribute them to people so they can show their support.

Coalitions – Building support for the anti-sweatshop campaign.

Involving groups through coalitions is key to building the grassroots movement necessary to get university administrators and corporations to agree to the demands of the campaign. Here are three models of coalitions:

- ★ The **paper tiger** model: a list of endorsers is built to lend credibility and breadth to the campaign. The endorsing groups may do little beyond adding their names to the list of supporters. You may ask them to help turn out people to events.
- ★ The **associate** model: Groups and leaders are encouraged to play an active role in the campaign (collecting signatures, letters, etc.) but decision-making still rests with the anti-sweat group.
- ★ The **partner** model: All groups share in decision-making and active participation.

Think about what model works best for your campus. If you are going to build a coalition based on the associate or partner model, member groups should be involved at the earliest stages of the campaign (i.e. the strategy to kick off the campaign and approach the administration).

The earlier you involve people and the more power is shared, the more folks will feel invested in the campaign's success.

When approaching other groups for support, here are some things to think about:

Why should the group care?

Sweatshops are an issue that are caused from a number of interrelating issues. In asking for support, approach the issue from any of these perspectives to make it relevant to the group.

What can the group do?

Depending on where you are with the campaign, and what sort of coalition you're forming, you can ask the group to sign on to a letter or write their own to the administration (in support of disclosure for example). You could prepare a resolution and ask people to endorse the campaign by passing the resolution. The content of the resolution can serve as an educational tool as well. The contact is also a chance to expand your core membership. Encourage anyone

interested to come to your meetings and get more involved. You could also ask the group if they would appoint a representative or liaison to your campaign.

Making the move – groups, individuals, and organizations to approach include:

Women’s and feminist organizations

Be sure to contact these groups early (as with ethnic organizations), there’s an obvious link here to the mostly female sweatshop workforce.

Queer student organizations

Include all identity-based student organizations in your strategy and planning. Students in LGBT groups, Gay-Straight Alliances, as well as feminist and ethnic organizations can become strong and powerful allies and create powerful campus coalitions.

Ethnic organizations

It’s especially important to contact these groups early, both as a matter of consideration and experience (at some campuses they already may be the group raising the sweatshop issue), and because their membership includes people in many of the other groups you’ll want to approach. Latino and Asian organizations (the ethnic groups most employed in US and offshore garment factories), African-American, Jewish, and Native America organizations are important agents and allies in the campaign.

Religious organizations

These groups can provide moral arguments and high ground and are especially important at Catholic and other religious schools. Talk to clergy about mentioning the issue at a sermon. Put leaflets at the exit of mass and services. Make announcements at services.

Community service organizations

Many organizations can offer volunteer support for events and actions, key links to other community related groups, and ideas on recruitment and volunteer retention.

Organized Parent Groups

Organized groups of parents can have significant influence because of their participation in school decision-making and awareness of politics on campus. While they may not be supportive, if your school’s Parent-Teacher Association will endorse your campaign, all the better.

Other School Clubs

Showing a broad base of support is always important. If you can show the administration that many students support your campaign, it can only further your goals.

Athletic Teams and Athletes

The students most directly connected to uniform purchasing issues would be very important and influential allies, especially as teams or star players. There is a lot working against you though: athletic scholarships and other perks as well as coaches influence against it. Take on the challenge! High-profile athlete involvement could take your campaign to a whole new level.

Student Government

Resolutions passed by student government have important symbolic value, can bring press attention, and boost the profile of your campaign. A good source of resources in many cases, but be forewarned, many student governments are populist and will only support your campaign after you gain a lot of support from other campus groups.

Faculty and staff unions

Faculty unions, like teachers' unions, can be very helpful.

Faculty who supported the 1980s anti-apartheid divestment campaigns, and anti-war movement veterans, and veterans from other past campus political struggles – are natural allies in many ways.

Faculty supporters can give you an opportunity to speak at a class, allow you to do campaign research for credit, co-sponsor speakers or screenings, require or promote attendance at events, make public statements of support and add legitimacy to your arguments, give you tips on who to talk to in the administration, sponsor a support resolution in Faculty Council (or equivalent faculty organization), and help your strategize on how to achieve your campaign goals – for those that have organizing experience.

Service workers unions and associations

Alliances with service workers on campus are important to building the sweatshop campaign and making the local connection, (e.g. living wage at home and abroad).

Chaplains and campus ministries

These folks can be very helpful. They can provide moral support and high ground, avenues into the administrations, and are especially important at Catholic and other religious/faith-based schools.

Union locals and Central Labor Councils

Local worker's unions are an excellent coalition-builder. They need support just as you do, so make sure to offer that their support for you will build their constituency as well. Given that the anti-sweat campaign is fundamentally based in institutionalizing improvements for workers, it is essential you support and work with your local unions as much as possible.

Stepping up the pressure!

The power of the pen: Sign-on letters and petitions are a good basic tool. Mass emailing is also effective. Students on some campuses have set up computers in a central area and had students passing by send emails on the spot to their university president or prominent sweatshop abuser.

Events and direct action: Both events and direct action can be used to build support for your campaign and educate the public. Direct actions differ from standard events in that they creatively disrupt public space. They are often technically illegal and sometimes confrontational.

Examples of events:

- ★ Benefit concert

- ★ Panel or forum with workers, community leaders, anti-sweatshop activists/experts, labor history professors, etc.
- ★ Candlelight vigils or homilies

Direct Action: Sit-ins to knit-ins and beyond!

From the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the Guerilla Girls, direct action and social change go hand in hand. Think creatively about your action. How will you get people's attention? Direct action signifies an escalation of your campaign so think about the timing, your demand, and the level of support you have on campus. There is a lot of planning that goes into a successful direct action.

Some questions to consider:

- ★ Who is your target?
- ★ What do you hope to accomplish?
- ★ Can you turn out the number of people needed to make the event a success? (You can leaflet with three people, but don't have a rally with less than several dozen!)
- ★ Do you have energetic speakers or an interesting performance planned?
- ★ Do you have something for people who attend to do to engage themselves in the campaign?
- ★ Is your message clear and simple?
- ★ Have you notified the press?
- ★ Is the timing and location of the event good to reach a lot of people?
- ★ Do you have all your facts straight?

Surveying some tactics – fun, creative actions.

Pickets

Pickets can be used as a one-time show of protest or can be weekly events to build the campaign. At the University of North Carolina, students began weekly pickets outside the administrative building demanding to know where their clothes were made. The pickets grew in size and volume. Use instruments like drums and prepare a chant sheet.

Clothesline

You can hang up school apparel or clothes made in other countries – attach pictures of conditions in countries where they are made, statistics about wages, or scrawl abuses garment workers commonly suffer on the apparel. For a more dramatic effect, you can splatter a blood-like substance on the clothes. Place in a prominent, hard-to-reach location.

Guerrilla or street theater

Design hangtags and put them on clothes in the bookstore or another retailer you are protesting. The hangtags can have pictures of the workers who make the clothes, or a quotation about working in a sweatshop. You can make a similar leaflet and put them in the pockets of the clothes.

Student Strikes

This isn't a common tactic in the US (anymore) but has been used in Europe, Indonesia, and Mexico recently. It really only has positive effects when it is campus-wide; the idea is to shut down the campus with a student strike.

Sweatshop Fashion Show

A mock fashion show has worked well on campus across the country to educate and interest students. The event is a great visual and can be very funny despite its serious theme. It does not take many people to pull this off: 4-5 models and 1-2 announcers. You can have an announcer describing the clothes and another announcing the workers' working conditions as a model walks the "runway." Do this in a central part of campus, and don't forget to call the media.

Strategy versus tactics: there's a big difference!

This comes from a small part of the Midwest Academy's Organizing for Social Change manual and the Grassroots Organizing Weekend (GROW) trainings that are available for you to bring to your campus (call (202) NO-SWEAT or email organize@usasnet.org).

Administrators do not make decisions based on how moral or well-researched you are on the subject of sweatshops. This is important, but when we've been articulating the same arguments over and over, for years, the only route to go is organizing.

Administrators make decisions based on their power and self-interest. They will put you off until you all exercise enough power over them where it is in their self-interest (for fundraising for the school, PR, or the future of their career) to do what was previously not in their self-interest. In short, you need to scare them.

Colleges and universities are really very undemocratic, despite appearances. Alone, we are relatively powerless, because the president of the university is not accountable to an individual. Fundamentally, students should have more governing power at their institutions, but that's another whole issue in itself.

You are aware that we win victories when we organize effectively and gain power over our targets. So how do we most effectively build power?

Too often, activists think in terms of tactics, and not strategy. Tactics should be tools that are grounded in your overall strategy for building power over your target. They are nothing more than figuring out the most effective and creative way to carry out that strategy.

There are various sorts of power we have as students. Understanding how the power of students and workers in the university relates to that of the administration is one of the most essential facets of winning campaigns. You can try to impact the fundraising ability of the president, public embarrassment, interfering with the careers of administrators, or creating situations where the administration loses their normal level of control over the campus and isn't able to function normally. This is all based on whatever strategy you decide to use. There can be more than one strategy in a campaign and, in fact, many effective campaigns use more than one.

Tactics are most effective when they are outside the experience of the target and within the experience of the students involved in your campaign. At some places, a letter-writing campaign could be enough. At others, where there are four rallies a week on campus, you won't be noticed without a large base of public support.

Every campaign doesn't have to end with a sit-in, although many have and need to get to that point. There are thousands of other ways to exercise power. Tactics are many and varied: from low-level like the presentation of thousands of petition signatures, or editorials in the student newspaper, to high-level tactics like sit-ins, hunger strikes, or lock outs.

One tactic is never enough. That's why you need to start thinking about strategy first.

To start thinking strategically, consider who your target is. Who will give you what you want? Who is close to him or her? Who has more influence over his or her decisions than you do, and how can you influence them to say what you want?

Consider your constituents and allies. Your constituents are the people you're trying to organize to build power. Allies can be found in unlikely places, for instance, at San Francisco State University, students said some of their strongest allies were in the Department of Fashion and Design. Think of the all of the groups mentioned above and what kind of support they could provide.

We also need to be conscious of our opponents – so think ahead! Don't let opponents distract you, just be aware of what they're doing and if needed, organize responses to their strikes at your campaign.

Think about your resources. Do you have a gathering place, an office, or a budget? Do you have contacts in the press? How about phone lists? Phones to phone-bank? Thinking about this will give you a greater sense of what you need to do and what you need to do it.

Finally, note that your victory is never final. Student pressure needs to be continual – especially if we're going to enforce our manufacturing Codes of Conduct and the Worker Rights Consortium's power to make change in garment factories. We need to make sure our student groups continue to exist after we're gone.

APPENDIX

united students against sweatshops

1150 17th St. NW Suite 300 Washington DC 20036;
tel: 202-NOSWEAT; fax: 202-293-5308
www.studentsagainstswheatshops.org

So you're interested in USAS... how do you get involved?

Check us out on the web: www.studentsagainstswheatshops.org

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Farmworker Solidarity/Ethical Contracting Committee Rep: Vanessa Cudabac, covetconan@hotmail.com, 516-724-1510

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At-Large: Isaac Silver, isaac@usasnet.org, 404-291-9686

At-Large: Miranda Nelson, miranda@usasnet.org, 773-350-4673

Sample Letter:

[YOUR GROUP NAME, SCHOOL, ETC.]

[DATE]

[ADMINISTRATOR NAME
SCHOOL
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear [INSERT ADMINISTRATOR HERE]

The [INSERT GROUP'S NAME HERE] has recently been doing a great deal of research into the global garment industry. It has come to our attention that workers' rights are being violated all over the world, and families are being kept in poverty, due to low-wage jobs with horrific working conditions. Sweatshops are a growing epidemic both in the United States and around the world. We are extremely concerned about [INSERT SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT'S NAME HERE]'s role in this abuse. As both a purchaser and licensor of apparel, [SCHOOL/SCHOOL DISTRICT] has a responsibility to ensure that these products are made under safe and lawful conditions. The workers who manufacture our apparel are a valuable part of our school community, and should be treated as such. We cannot allow them to be exploited in our name.

We understand that we are not experts in global workers' rights, nor do we have the capacity to monitor all of the factories with which our school district licenses. The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), however, is an independent monitoring agency, founded in order to conduct investigations of factories that manufacture licensed goods for educational institutions.

Enclosed, please find additional information about the WRC. We strongly urge you to affiliate [SCHOOL DISTRICT] with the WRC, and would like to meet with you to further discuss this issue. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

[YOUR GROUP]

Sample Flyer

The following is a two-sided half page flyer taken from a National Day of Action organized by members of the Progressive Student Union of The George Washington University:

NATIONAL CALL-IN DAY!

CONTACT ARAMARK'S DIRECTOR OF DINING SERVICES OPERATIONS JIM GILLESPIE AND TELL HIM YOU DO NOT SUPPORT UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICES AT YOUR SCHOOL!

Jim's office number: (202) 994-8943 Fax: (202) 994-5340 e-mail: jimgill@gwu.edu

Also contact:

Michael Peller (Managing Director Business Services-GWU) phone: (202) 994-1401

fax: 202-994-4453 e-mail: mpeller@gwu.edu

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg (President GWU) phone: 202-994-6400 fax:202-994-0654

e-mail(assistant to the president) hdi@gwu.edu

BECAUSE:

The working conditions at J-Street are unsafe

Verbal and physical harassment of workers SHOULD NOT be a regular occurrence

Workers' health insurance hasn't consistently been provided even though they've paid for it

Workers have been forced to take pay cuts in order to staff of the stations that they work, like Burger King and Taco Bell, even ones who have been there for years.

RESPECT AND DIGNITY ARE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

The logo for The George Washington University, featuring the text "THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY" in a stylized, serif font, with "WASHINGTON DC" written in a smaller font above it.

For more info, contact the Progressive Student Union at gwpsu@gwu.edu

Sample E-mail/Fax

Dear Mr. Gillespie, Mr. Peller, President Trachtenberg,

As a member of The George Washington University community, I'm concerned with issues of unfair labor practices such as widespread pay discrepancies, lack of payment into the healthcare plan, safety violations, general lack of respect, as well as numerous other contract violations by Aramark (contracted by The George Washington University to supervise dining services). Additionally, a number of workers have been suspended and fired without due process and without just cause. I urge Aramark to negotiate fairly when contract negotiations continue on September 24th and 25th, 2002. I believe that Aramark has the responsibility to uphold basic worker and human rights. The George Washington University has the responsibility to hold Aramark accountable in order to ensure that our dining service employees are afforded the dignity and respect their work should guarantee. I support the workers as they begin contract negotiations as the bargaining unit of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 25.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE PETITION*

The following was taken from the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition

Dear School Board President:

Please take a stand against child labor and sweatshops. We the undersigned ask the [insert name of school district] to implement a policy of "informed choice" in the purchase of all apparel to insure that taxpayer dollars spent by our schools won't go to manufacturers who refuse to comply with appropriate labor standards.

Name (print)

Name (signature)

Address

1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____
13.	_____	_____
14.	_____	_____

*Adapt for local use within a single district, adding local contact information on each sheet so that completed petitions can be returned and presented together.

Sample Press Release

The following was created by Behind the Labels and adopted for The George Washington University Progressive Student Union:

Allison Robbins
202-242-0027
peaceout@gwu.edu

4/25/02

Nationwide Campaign Against U.S. Sweatshops Comes to Washington D.C. April 24, 2002 to May 1, 2002

The George Washington University Progressive Student Union will Host Screening of Behind the Labels: Garment Workers on U.S. Saipan.

TIME Magazine calls it a “revelatory film about wage slavery, American-style”

As part of “Looking Behind the Labels,” a week-long national campaign to inform U.S. consumers about the abusive conditions facing garment workers who make clothes sold at major U.S. retailers, The GW Progressive Student Union (PSU) will host a Washington D.C. screening of Behind the Labels: Garment Workers on U.S. Saipan, the powerful new film by WITNESS (www.witness.org) and Emmy-nominated Director/Producer Tia Lessin with narration by Susan Sarandon. Behind the Labels will air in over 30 cities including name city as part of the week-long campaign. Later in May it will be shown at a screening on Capitol Hill.

The screening of Behind the Labels will be held on Tuesday April 30th at 8pm at 800 21st Street NW, 3rd floor Amphitheater. Footage from the video will be available to broadcast journalists – please contact WITNESS. The film, which *TIME Magazine* called “a revelatory film about wage slavery, American-style”, focuses on the sweatshop conditions inside garment factories on the pacific island of Saipan—the only U.S. territory exempt from U.S. federal minimum wage and immigration laws.

Through hidden camera video and powerful interviews, Behind the Labels vividly captures the human consequence of the U.S. decision to turn a blind eye on the Saipan garment industry: desperate women from China and the Philippines pay to work in sweatshop conditions of indentured labor: debt bondage, sixteen hour shifts, payless paydays and routine lockdowns. The clothing sewn by these wage slaves bears the "Made in the USA" label, and is shipped duty and quota-free to the U.S for sale by brand name retail outlets including the GAP, J. Crew, Polo and other retailers. Among these retailers the GAP has especially resisted settlement of lawsuits that would provide for compensation for abuses, and for independent monitoring on the island. Campaigners say the gap between the GAP’s Code of Conduct and its actual business practices is very wide.

Chie Abad, a former Saipan garment worker in a GAP-contracted factory, and activist for the human rights group Global Exchange notes, “We want to pay off our debts way back home. That’s why we keep working and working and working under these horrible conditions. It’s really slavery.”

This week-long national effort is sponsored by a coalition of organizations including WITNESS, UNITE!, United Students against Sweatshops (USAS), Campaign for Labor Rights, Behindthelabel.org, and Global Exchange. All organizations are engaged in separate campaigns around different sweatshop issues both here in the US and abroad.

To arrange interviews with activist Chie Abad, please contact Jason at Global Exchange at (415) 558-9486 xt 230. For award-winning Director/Producer Tia Lessin, video clips or more information contact or Sam Gregory, WITNESS at 212-274-1664 xt 207 or sam@witness.org.

The following was used at Indiana University:

Popular Education Workshop on the Sweat-Free IU Campaign

30 Minute Version

Warming Up/Introductions/Purpose

Introduce selves briefly, any affiliation or personal history that's appropriate (both presenters) and thank the participants; welcome them.

The purpose of this workshop is to talk about the global economy, the use of sweatshops in the apparel industry, how this is related to I.U., and what we can do about it.

Ice-Breaker:

Before we begin, we'd like you to think about the concept of social change. There are at least three responses that we as individual citizens can have to a problem in our world. For the sake of an example, toxic waste is scheduled to be dumped near our town and threatens our water supply. What are some things we could do? How would you respond?

Write down participants' responses on the board/flip-chart. As you write them, group them yourself into lists corresponding to individual action (letter-writing...) and collective action (group protests, rallies...), without explicitly labeling the lists as such. (When there is a silent moment, make a third column and write "do nothing" to elicit some smiles.) After you have a good number of responses, label the lists as individual and collective action.

Though individual action is important, we can often make bigger changes when we work collectively. What are some examples of collective action in the history of our country? (civil rights, women's rights, South African divestment, gay rights...). Activists around the country are organizing around the issue of the global economy and sweatshops. We'd like you to keep the possibilities of collective action in mind as we talk today.

(My outfit today is a symbol of the global economy. My shirt was made in El Salvador, the label on my Gap jeans says they were made in the US but I found a note inside the pocket, when I bought them, stating that they were made in Mexico, my belt is from Italy. (Remember to check your clothing before you do this part!) I'm connected to people all around the world because of the clothes I wear and the global economy.)

Myth and Reality about the Global Economy

So what are some features of the global economy? Ask people to give their ideas and what it means to them....brainstorm....not necessary to write on board.

The global economy means that trade can move freely across national borders, with little regulation and restriction. The global economy also means that corporations can search the globe for: (write 1-3 below on board)

- ★ lowest wages, least benefits for workers
- ★ most repression of workers attempting to unionize
- ★ lax environmental laws
- ★ The global economy, therefore, encourages companies to set up facilities in poor, developing countries, such as Honduras, El Salvador, Vietnam, and China.

Another negative result in the global economy is that local culture is being replaced by corporate culture. For example, the Commons in the IMU used to serve regional food and be decorated with old photographs and paintings of IU history. Now, there is a Burger King there.

There are some myths about the global economy:

Myth #1: Global economy benefits workers and local economies in poor countries by providing jobs.

Reality #1: While companies do provide jobs to workers in poor countries, these jobs typically do not offer a living wage or pension benefits. What do you think a living wage should cover for a worker?

Living wage is defined as an income that meets the worker's basic food, clothing, health care, potable water, transportation, child care, education, and housing/energy costs + 10% income savings.

(In El Salvador, where my shirt was made, the top wage in a garment factory is \$5.25 a day through workers require a minimum of \$10.83 a day to meet basic expenses.)

Also, workers increasingly can't even afford to buy the clothing they make! Some Nike workers in Indonesia, for example, would need to spend more than a months' wages on one pair of Nike shoes.

Myth #2: Given enough time the global economy will lead to prosperity and economic equality between countries.

Reality #2: In actuality, the global economy is not a new phenomenon. The world has been linked in a global economy – through colonization and trade – involving slaves, precious metals, and simple manufacturers since the fifteenth century. The legacy of earlier manifestations of the global economy is extreme economic inequalities between nations. There is nothing "natural" about poverty on a global scale; it is the product of hundreds of years of colonial development and globalization.

Apparel Sweatshops and How They Exploit

Sweatshops are a good example of the global economy in action.

Write the word "sweatshop" on the board or the flipchart.

Let's do a quick imaging exercise. What are the pictures, feelings, smells, sounds, and words that come to mind when you read the word "sweatshop"?

Write people's images/words on the board. After doing this for a little while, put up our definition of sweatshops and show briefly how it ties into some of their images.

A sweatshop is a workplace in the apparel industry where workers are subject to extreme exploitation, including the absence of a living wage or benefits, poor working conditions, and arbitrary discipline.

Sweatshops impact the lives of many people.

Sweatshops are a workers' rights issue.

Some say workers in these countries make enough to live on in that country, though it sounds low by US standards. This is simply incorrect.

Indonesian workers: in some plans make \$2.50 a day though three meals and a ride to work costs \$4.00 a day.

Sweatshops are a women’s rights issue.

***Sweatshop workers here and abroad are primarily female. 90% of the workforce is female, between the ages of 16-25. Most of the women in this room would be sweatshop workers, for example. (If speaking to student audience!)

Women workers are subject to special forms of corporate abuse on the job. For example, workers in some Mexican and Central American plants are given Depro-Provera shots as a preconditions for employment to prevent pregnancy and to prevent menstruation. This helps the company increase productivity by cutting down on bathroom break time. In many places, if a woman becomes pregnant or if she refuses to submit to the shot, she is immediately fired.

Sweatshops are a civil rights issue.

Organizing rights are civil rights. Sweatshop workers here and abroad don’t have the basic civil rights they need to form unions. Many union activists are imprisoned, the military is called upon to clamp down on strikes, and people are beaten up by company goons when they try to organize other workers.

Sweatshops are an environmental issue.

The global economy has resulted in severe environmental destruction as companies move their facilities across borders to avoid stringent environmental regulations. The increase in air pollution, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, the contamination of the ocean, and disrupted ecosystems are all results of the global economy.

Worker housing, sanitation, and water adds up to an unhealthy living environment. In the sweatshops there is poor ventilation causing allergies and chest infections.

Sweatshops are a domestic issue.

Well-paying jobs in the apparel industry have dried up in the US in the last decade while the number of sweatshops, here and abroad, has increased.

The Department of Labor estimates that at least half of the country’s 22,000 apparel shops can be classified as sweatshops. Most of the workers in this country are immigrants and female. In one recent example, 72 Thai garment workers were enslaved in an El Monte, California apartment complex until discovered in August of 1995.

It is clear from these examples that sweatshop exploitation affects many people, in diverse ways, by violating their rights as individuals. Sweatshop exploitation is a labor rights issue, a women’s rights issue, an environmental issue and a domestic issues -- but ultimately, it is a HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE and must be recognized as such those who manufacture and buy apparel.

Sweat-Free I.U. Campaign:

Begin passing out the Sweat-Free I.U. brochures and Q &A handout, either now or at the end of this section.

The Sweat-Free IU campaign is part of a growing national movement at over 30 universities and 150 colleges. Successful campaigns include Duke University and University of Wisconsin at Madison among others.

In a discussion with City Council members earlier this semester, Chancellor Kenneth Gros-Louis said he thought students on this campus were apathetic about the sweatshop issue! But of

course, that's not the case: The campaign started last spring and is bringing together students, faculty, members of the faith community, labor unions, and community groups to get IU to agree to full public disclosure of its licensee's manufacturing locations and pass a Code of Conduct for the sweatshops that produce IU logo apparel. We have already won Full Public Disclosure. The Code of Conduct we want calls for:

a right to organize unions

a living wage and benefits (only unionization in other countries will bring about fair compensation but demanding a fair wage from here will give support to unionization drives abroad)

decent conditions of work

freedom from arbitrary discipline

independent monitoring of the conditions in apparel factories by human rights, community, and religious groups

In sum:

A SMALL NUMBER OF BANKERS, BILLIONAIRES, AND POLITICIANS MADE THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND CREATED THE SITUATION THAT ALLOWS SWEATSHOPS TO THRIVE; A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE, WORKING TOGETHER, CAN DISMANTLE IT!

If you're interested in getting involved, please give us your email address on the sheet which is being circulated.

Presenters: Please be sure to fill out your own evaluation on the back of the sign-up sheet and return it to Amber or to the appropriate file folder in the No Sweat! office in the IMU. Thank-you!

Anti-Sweatshop Fashion Show Script

The following was written by the Progressive Student Union of The George Washington University:

April 4, 2002

National Student Labor Day of Action

George Washington University

(MC of the action will introduce the fashion show)

Announcer: Hello and welcome to GW's first anti-sweatshop fashion show. Today we're going to model some of the fine products for sale at GW's very own Follett Bookstore. These clothes are on sale right across the street in the Marvin Center basement.

Announcer: That's all true, _____, but this isn't an advertisement for the bookstore. We're going to be focusing on the conditions under which the clothes were made, not where they are sold.

Announcer: Exactly, since the fall of 1999, members of the Progressive Student Union have been pressuring GW's administration to affiliate with the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). The WRC is the only independent monitoring agency, which conducts factory investigations on behalf of affiliated colleges and universities.

Announcer: President Trachtenberg assures us that GW doesn't use sweatshops, but what we're about to see may put some doubt in your mind. We are going to have some speakers throughout the fashion show, who will help us learn more about GW's labor practices. And now, let's bring out our first model.

Sweatshirt made in Mexico:

Announcer: _____ is wearing a great sweatshirt made in Mexico. This sweatshirt was most likely made in Puebla, Mexico, which located south east of Mexico City. The average wage of a factory worker in this part of Mexico is \$4.50 a day, or between 25 and 50 US dollars a week. It has been determined that workers in Puebla would need at least \$69 per week to meet their basic needs.

Announcer: According to Mexican labor law, the daily maximum hours a person is allowed to work is 8, but workers in Mexico's factories report 10-12 hour days. Overtime pay is rare, and when it is granted, it is not at the premium rate. Forced overtime is extremely common in this area.

Announcer: Independent unions have traditionally been repressed in Mexico, and those factories that do have unions, often have company-controlled unions, which do little, if anything at all for their members. In large part because of this, most factories in this part of Mexico have poor health and safety practices. Additionally, sexual harassment and forced pregnancy testing, forced birth control, and forced abortions are common. Another problem that plagues this area is child labor. Despite Mexico's labor laws, conditions in Mexico's factories are deplorable.

Announcer: Thank you very much _____. Let's bring up our next model.

Windbreaker made by Gear for Sports in Malaysia:

Announcer: _____ is wearing a sporty windbreaker from Malaysia. This windbreaker was made by Gear for Sports, and reminds us that GW has been around since 1821.

According to the National Labor Committee, the average Malaysian factory worker makes only \$1.15 an hour.

Announcer: There isn't too much information available on textile factories in Malaysia. However, this country can be found listed along with its Asian neighbors as some of the worst sweatshop abusers in the world. In 1994 the World Bank wrote that the Malaysian government restructured its labor sector to suppress radical activity, in order to ensure political stability. The World Bank has said that the government abolished trade-based labor unions and promoted the creation of company-based unions.

Announcer: As we saw in earlier Mexico, company-based unions tend to have little positive affect on the lives of workers. They almost always allow horrible and unlawful practices to continue inside the workplace, which are detrimental to the health and well being of factory employees. Let's see who we've got next.

T-shirt from Mexico:

Announcer: Here comes _____, with a t-shirt made in Mexico. We were speaking earlier of company unions, and I would bet that _____'s t-shirt was made in a factory with a company union, if it had any union at all. What do you think _____?

Announcer: Well, you may be right _____. But, GW does use the Mexmode factory in Mexico, which has one of the first independent unions in all of Mexico's factories. The factory, which used to be known as Kukdong, was the site of the WRC's first investigation last year. The WRC investigation uncovered deplorable and unlawful working conditions, including rotten food, child labor, and physical and verbal abuse by managers.

Announcer: That's right, and because of the WRC investigation, and pressure put on the factory management by US students, administrators, and companies, the Mexmode factory has been cleaned up. Workers are no longer eating rotten food, and they were able to vote in their own independent union. It seems to me that the WRC is effective in what it does, and that it produces real positive change.

Announcer: Maybe the GW administration should reconsider affiliating with the Worker Rights Consortium, after all. Let's see what our next model is wearing.

Visor and Fleece from Taiwan:

Announcer: It looks like _____ is wearing both a GW fleece and a GW visor. Both items were made in Taiwan by Gear for Sports. Joshua Brown served as a factory inspector in Taiwan for some time, and he has published articles describing what he saw. Joshua's inspecting company was paid by major manufacturing companies, which are household names here in the U.S.

Announcer: Joshua described one factory that he visited as "a dark basement factory with poor ventilation and dangerous equipment." He went on to say that there was no first aid kit and the fire extinguishers had expired many years before. Workers that he interviewed told him that they were being paid half of the wage assigned to them in their contract. One worker expressed the desire to run away, but this boss kept all of his documentation in a safe. Essentially, he was trapped into working for that factory.

Announcer: That's horrible _____. It sounds like indentured servitude to me. In another factory Joshua uncovered dangerous metal-melting chemicals in large vats. Workers who were wearing flip-flops were mixing these chemicals, a clear danger to their health. At this same

factory, workers were not being paid overtime at the legal rate, imported workers were denied access to their passports, and many workers were working 90-hours a week.

Announcer: It seems like Joshua saw a lot of terrible things while he was inspecting factories in Taiwan. Most of these violations did not reach the American public, however, because the companies, which support Joshua's monitoring agency, don't always make this information public. This is another reason why affiliating with an independent monitoring agency, like the WRC, is so important. Let's go to our next model.

Hooded Sweatshirt from Mexico

Announcer: Next up we've got _____, with a styling new GW hoodie. This sweatshirt, like many of the clothes we're modeling this afternoon, was made in Mexico. _____, you've got a story from a worker from Mexico, don't you?

Announcer: Yes, I've got testimony from a worker named Cristina who works in a factory in Mexico. She says, "I work at Vaqueros Navarra. I've worked there for 5 years. I earn 280 pesos a week (US\$35). I pay 72 pesos a week (US\$9) to get a ride to work. I'm never allowed to take a vacation. Monday through Friday, I work from 8:15 in the morning to 8:15 or 8:30 at night. Sometimes I stay until 9:30 at night. I get one hour for lunch. Saturday I work from 8 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m., with no break. I am very hungry by the time I leave work. I'm never paid anything extra if I work more hours."

Announcer: Wow, it sounds like Cristina is worked pretty hard. I don't know how I would survive if I had to work that many hours a week and especially on Saturdays working for 9 hours without a break. It's pretty horrific what some companies force their workers to do. Let's see what our next model has to show.

Sweatshirt made by Champion in Guatemala

Announcer: _____ is wearing a Champion GW sweatshirt made in Guatemala. Last year, the Progressive Student Union was able to receive public disclosure of the names and locations of the factories that produce for GW through the Collegiate Licensing Company. However, this disclosure info shows no Champion factories in Guatemala. The CLC has been proven wrong before. Numerous colleges and universities nationwide have found New Era Cap Company hats in their bookstores, which say "Made in China." Yet, the CLC's disclosure information contains no mention of any New Era factories in China. Our university sites the Collegiate Licensing Company's code of conduct as a reason not to create one of its own. But, if the CLC can't even be honest about where its clothes are made, how can we trust it to be honest about what conditions its clothing is made under?

Announcer: Two of the biggest problems in Guatemala's textile factories are sexual discrimination and child labor. According to Human Rights Watch, one woman worker, Sara Fernández reported that she was forced to go to a private laboratory and pay for a pregnancy exam in order to provide proof that she was not pregnant, before a factory would hire her. Another female factory worker, Miriam de Rosario, was fired from her job when she was 27 years old because she was pregnant. Managers told her that she would not work extra hours, could not be made to stand for long periods of time, and would not work as hard as others, because of her pregnancy.

Announcer: Many female workers in Guatemala's factories are discriminated against based on their reproductive status, that is, pregnancy and maternity status and access to reproductive health care. Indigenous female workers face discrimination based upon both sex and ethnicity. Many factories require women to prove their pregnancy status as a condition of employment,

either through questions on job applications, in interviews, or through physical examinations. Additionally, many employers deny women their full maternity benefits as required by Guatemalan law, if they do become pregnant on the job.

Announcer: Guatemalan factories also regularly obstruct workers' access to the employee health care system, even though workers have a right to belong. They do this by either not enrolling employees or by denying them the necessary certificate and time off to visit a health facility. Additionally, women often start work when they are under the age of 18. Human Rights Watch estimates that 12% of workers in this industry in Guatemala are under the age of 16. Our next model is _____ let's see what we can find out about (his/her) clothing.

Sweatshirt made in Mexico and Hat made in China

Announcer: _____ is wearing a GW hat made in China and a GW sweatshirt from Mexico. We've talked a lot about Mexico today, but we haven't discussed why there are so many instances of poor working conditions in Mexico. The apparel industry in Mexico underwent tremendous growth during the 1990s. The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into effect in 1994, was a major contributor to this growth.

Announcer: Another free trade agreement, which is currently being discussed, is the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). This agreement would essentially expand NAFTA to all of the countries in the Americas, excluding only Cuba. Free trade has allowed large US companies to enter Mexico and set up factories at an extremely low cost, thus taking away US jobs. Traditionally, these companies are deeply involved in the race to the bottom, and factories in free trade zones tend to exploit their workers and break local labor laws in order to keep costs down.

Announcer: The hat that _____ is wearing was probably not made under the very best conditions either. The National Labor Committee did a survey of 21 apparel factories in China and discovered 10-15 hour shifts per day, 60-90 hour work weeks, and 6 and 7 day work weeks. Workers generally receive below subsistence wages of 13-28 cents an hour with no benefits and forced, uncompensated overtime. Factories are usually an unsafe and unsanitary working environment, with workers being housed in crowded dormitories with 24 hour surveillance.

Announcer: The majority of factory workers in China are young, immigrant women from rural areas. Many of these workers are unaware of their legal rights. Many workers live in constant fear of being fired for protesting factory conditions or discussing them with outside reporters. Factory owners and managers repress workers' attempts to organize independently.

Hooded Sweatshirt made by MV Sport in Pakistan

Announcer: Our next model _____, is wearing a hooded sweatshirt made by MV Sport in Karachi, Pakistan. Workers in Pakistan's factories receive a salary of somewhere between 20 and 26 cents an hour. A typical Pakistani survives on less than \$5 per day, and traditionally, the earnings of one person go to feed many mouths. With inflation high, it is very difficult for a low-income population to survive.

Announcer: Pakistan has become a major production center for export to world markets. Unfortunately, however, this has not come without cost. The problem of child labor runs rampant throughout Pakistan, and the National Labor Committee estimates that 60% of Pakistani children under the age of 14 work to support their families. Children work instead of going to school. As an institute of higher education, GW should do everything possible to ensure that it does not support the labor of children over the education of children. Who do we have up next?

T-Shirt made in Mexico

Announcer: Our next model is _____, who is wearing a sweatshirt from northeastern Mexico. In this area, 4 out of 10 new jobs over the past few years have been textile factory jobs. Textile factories didn't arrive in this area until the 1980s, but since that time industry growth has been incredible. It should also be noted that since the imposition of NAFTA, union representation in this area has declined considerably and collective bargaining is rare.

Announcer: While company investment into northeastern Mexico may have increased, government spending on public services decreased by more than 50% between 1994 and 1999. Public transportation, education, health care, and urban infrastructure, are all in decline. Infrastructure for export transportation and investment has improved, however. Let's bring up our next model.

Long Sleeve T-Shirt by Jansport from US

Announcer: _____ is wearing a Jansport long sleeve t-shirt made right here in the USA. When most people hear the word sweatshop, they automatically think of workers somewhere in the global south. However, it is estimated that 50% of the garment factories in the US can be considered sweatshops as well. This is especially true in big cities such as New York and LA. Sweatshops hide in basements of buildings and often hire immigrants. Sweatshops are a huge problem all over the world, but too often we forget that there are people being exploited right in our own backyards.

Announcer: That's all very true, _____, but sweatshops in America don't always hide in big cities, and the typical sweatshop worker doesn't have to be an immigrant. In Derby, NY, a small town outside of Buffalo, workers at the New Era Cap factory have been on strike since July.

The WRC conducted an investigation of the plant last summer and found that the injury rate at this particular factory was 4 times the industry average. Additionally, the company's managers refused to negotiate a fair contract, and instead proposed a contract that would significantly lower the wages of the majority of workers. These are only a few of the abuses uncovered in a small town factory in New York. Fortunately, GW suspended its contract with the New Era Cap Company, at the request of New Era employees, until the company negotiates fairly with its workers.

Sweatshirt made by Champion in Mexico

Announcer: _____ is modeling for us a lovely GW sweatshirt made by Champion in Mexico. It is quite possibly made in the northeastern region of Mexico where workers make between 16 and 32 US dollars per week. It is estimated that workers must make \$69 per week in order to meet their basic needs. Despite a legal maximum of 8 work hours per day, most workers work 9-12 hour days, with overtime not being rewarded at a premium rate, and forced overtime is common.

Announcer: While this area of Mexico is typically advertised as an area in which companies have the option of hiring either union or non-union labor, many instances of firings and black listings when workers attempt to form an independent union, have been reported. There are also numerous reports of sexual harassment in the workplace, and women undergo forced pregnancy tests upon hiring, and subsequently every 2 months. A high incident of accidents is common in this area due, in large part, to poor health and safety practices. Unjustified firing is another common practice in this area.

Hat and Hippo Toy made in China

Announcer: _____, our next model, is wearing a GW hat and holding a GW hippo stuffed animal. Both items were made in China. China's garment sector is made up primarily of rural workers who come to the city. They are forced to obtain a work permit before they are allowed to leave their villages, and must gain another work permit once they are employed in the city. Rural workers are not entitled to any benefits once they enter the city, and do not have the right to own property, to residency, or to bring their family into the city with them. Once a worker's contract is up, she is forced to return to her village.

Announcer: Many factories pay for some or all work permits when migrant workers are unable to afford it. Others require new workers to pay a deposit, which is only returned when their contract is finished. Other methods of bonding workers to a company are factories retaining part of workers monthly wages or keeping workers permits and identity papers. Workers are required to live in dormitories that are often crowded, dirty, and highly regulated.

Announcer: Health conditions in China's factories are deplorable as well. High rates of lung disease have been found among cotton textile workers in China, and exposure to toxic chemicals used in cloth processing and shoe production is also extremely dangerous. Repetitive motion injuries are also extremely common. Most workers in Chinese factories are young females. Women over the age of 35 are often fired simply because of their age, and have extreme difficulty finding work elsewhere.

Announcer: The cute hippo in _____'s hand was probably made by someone who is about the age of a typical GW student. The National Labor Committee recently came out with a report uncovering the truth behind China's toy factories. Most workers work mandatory 15-16 ½ hour shifts, with some reaching 20 hours. A typical workweek is 7 days, and workers work every day of the month for 12-14 cent wages. This brings their earnings to about \$8.42 for a 71 ¼ hour workweek. Factory temperatures often reach 104 degrees. Workers are working with chemicals they know nothing about, and which are extremely dangerous. Workers are constantly dizzy and nauseas, and many faint. Sick workers are fired. These are the appalling conditions under which 71% of the toys imported into the US are made.

T-Shirt from Mexico

Announcer: _____ is wearing a t-shirt, which was made in northeastern Mexico. Factory workers in this part of Mexico are supervised rigidly and must meet daily production quotas. One worker stated that, "They won't even give you a chance to stand up, turn your head, sigh or stretch, because otherwise you will not have enough time to make your quota."

Announcer: Working conditions in this sector of Mexico are extremely unhealthy. Migraines, allergies, skin problems, back problems, arthritis, asthma, and other lung diseases are quite common. Communities surrounding factories are negatively affected, as well. Environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources (especially water), health problems, family violence, and addictions are also common. Let's see what our next model is wearing.

Zip-Sweatshirt made by Gear for Sports in Pakistan and a T-shirt from Israel

Announcer: Our next model, _____, is wearing a stylish zip-sweatshirt made by Gear for Sports in Pakistan, and underneath, (she/he) has on a GW t-shirt made in Israel. We discussed earlier the large problem of child labor in Pakistan. Along with apparel, the US imports soccer balls from Pakistan. In fact, 80% of soccer balls imported into the US are produced in a small eastern region of Pakistan. The workers in this area typically fall between 5 and 14 years of age, according to the International Labor Rights Fund. They are sold into servitude and are

forced to work 20 hour days, 7 days a week, often eating, sleeping, and working in the same small room.

Announcer: _____'s t-shirt was made in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is seen as a place of refuge for many people. However, many people working in the garment factories of Jerusalem would like to seek refuge from the city. Jerusalem, like most major cities worldwide, hides its garment factories, and the conditions under which clothing is made can only be speculated. However, many US consumers have traditionally accepted the "Made in Israel" label, as an assurance of safe, lawful, working conditions. Companies have, however, built factories in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which are not considered part of Israel proper. Yet, because of US trade law, factories in these areas can legally sew "Made in Israel" labels into their clothing.

Sweatshirt from Mexico

Announcer: Well, we've only got one model left, and we'd like to thank you for coming out to our sweatshop fashion show this afternoon. We encourage you to please stick around for some more speakers and chanting. Our last model is _____, and (he/she) is wearing a GW sweatshirt manufactured in Mexico.

Announcer: As our final model shows off (his/her) sweatshirt, I would like to read a story from Karina Sánchez, a 20 year old factory worker in Mexico. She says, "I go in at 3 in the afternoon, and leave at midnight. If I have to do overtime, I don't leave until 3 o'clock in the morning. We are only allowed to go the washrooms 3 times a day, for 2 minutes each time. We have 10 minutes to eat between 5 and 6 in the evening, and 15 minutes after 9 o'clock. Outside of that we cannot talk. We are treated somewhat like slaves. We can't talk, laugh, or anything. By the end of the day, you just want to get home and lie down."

Thank you very much for joining us, we hope you will urge President Trachtenberg to affiliate with the Worker Rights Consortium in order help end sweatshop labor.

Worker Rights Consortium Model Code of Conduct:

I. Introduction

A. The Universities participating in the Worker Rights Consortium are each committed to conducting their business affairs in a socially responsible and ethical manner consistent with their respective educational, research and/or service missions, and to protecting and preserving the global environment.

B. While the Consortium and the Member Institutions believe that Licensees share this commitment, the Consortium and the Member Institutions have adopted the following Code of Conduct (the “Code”) which requires that all Licensees, at a minimum, adhere to the principles set forth in the Code.

C. Throughout the Code the term “Licensee” shall include all persons or entities which have entered into a written “License Agreement” with the University manufacture “Licensed Articles” (as that term is defined in the License Agreement) bearing the names, trademarks and/or images of one or more Member Institutions. The term “Licensee” shall for purposes of the Code, and unless otherwise specified in the Code, encompass all of Licensees’ contractors, subcontractors or manufacturers which produce, assemble or package finished Licensed Articles for the consumer.

II. Notice

A. The principles set forth in the Code shall apply to all Licensees.

B. As a condition of being permitted to produce and/or sell Licensed Articles, Licensees must comply with the Code. Licensees are required to adhere to the Code within six (6) months of notification of the Code and as required in applicable license agreements.

III. Standards

A. Licensees agree to operate work places and contract with companies whose work places adhere to the standards and practices described below. The University prefers that Licensees exceed these standards.

B. Legal Compliance: Licensees must comply with all applicable legal requirements of the country(ies) of manufacture in conducting business related to or involving the production or sale of Licensed Articles. Where there are differences or conflicts with the Code and the laws of the country(ies) of manufacture, the higher standard shall prevail, subject to the considerations stated in Section VI.

C. Employment Standards: Licensees shall comply with the following standards:

1. Wages and Benefits: Licensees recognize that wages are essential to meeting employees’ basic needs. Licensees shall pay employees, as a floor, wages and benefits which comply with all applicable laws and regulations, and which provide for essential needs and establish a dignified living wage for workers and their families. [A living wage is a “take home” or “net” wage, earned during a country’s legal maximum work week, but not more than 48 hours. A living wage provides for the basic needs (housing, energy, nutrition, clothing, health care, education, potable water, childcare, transportation and savings) of an average family unit of employees in the garment manufacturing employment sector of the country divided by the average number of adult wage earners in the family unit of employees in the garment manufacturing employment sector of the country.]

2. Working Hours: Hourly and/or quota-based wage employees shall (i) not be required to work more than the lesser of (a) 48 hours per week or (b) the limits on regular hours allowed by the law of the country of manufacture, and (ii) be entitled to at least one day off in every seven day period, as well as holidays and vacations.
3. Overtime Compensation: All overtime hours must be worked voluntarily by employees. In addition to their compensation for regular hours of work, hourly and/or quota-based wage employees shall be compensated for overtime hours at such a premium rate as is legally required in the country of manufacture or, in those countries where such laws do not exist, at a rate at least one and one-half their regular hourly compensation rate.
4. Child Labor: Licensees shall not employ any person at an age younger than 15 (or 14, where, consistent with International Labor Organization practices for developing countries, the law of the country of manufacture allows such exception). Where the age for completing compulsory education is higher than the standard for the minimum age of employment stated above, the higher age for completing compulsory education shall apply to this section. Licensees agree to consult with governmental, human rights, and nongovernmental organizations, and to take reasonable steps as evaluated by the University to minimize the negative impact on children released from employment as a result of implementation or enforcement of the Code.
5. Forced Labor: There shall not be any use of forced prison labor, indentured labor, bonded labor or other forced labor.
6. Health and Safety: Licensees shall provide a safe and healthy working environment to prevent accidents and injury to health arising out of, linked with, or occurring in the course of work or as a result of the operation of Licensee facilities. In addition, Licensees must comply with the following provisions:
 - a. The Licensee shall ensure that its direct operations and those of any subcontractors comply with all workplace safety and health regulations established by the national government where the production facility is located, or with Title 29 CFR of the Federal Code of Regulations, enforced by Federal OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), whichever regulation is more health protective for a given hazard.
 - b. The Licensee shall ensure that its direct operations and subcontractors comply with all health and safety conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) ratified and adopted by the country in which the production facility is located.
7. Nondiscrimination: No person shall be subject to any discrimination in employment, including hiring, salary, benefits, advancement, discipline, termination or retirement, on the basis of gender, race, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, political opinion, or social or ethnic origin.
8. Harassment or Abuse: Every employee shall be treated with dignity and respect. No employee shall be subject to any physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal harassment or abuse. Licensees will not use or tolerate any form of corporal punishment.
9. Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining: Licensees shall recognize and respect the right of employees to freedom of association and collective bargaining. No employee shall be subject to harassment, intimidation or retaliation in their efforts to freely associate or bargain collectively. Licensees shall not cooperate with governmental agencies and other organizations that use the power of the State to prevent workers from organizing a union of their choice. Licensees shall allow union organizers free access to employees. Licensees shall recognize the union of the employees' choice.

10. Women's Rights

- a. Women workers will receive equal remuneration, including benefits; equal treatment; equal evaluation of the quality of their work; and equal opportunity to fill all positions open to male workers.
- b. Pregnancy tests will not be a condition of employment, nor will they be demanded of employees.
- c. Workers who take maternity leave will not face dismissal nor threat of dismissal, loss of seniority or deduction of wages, and will be able to return to their former employment at the same rate of pay and benefits.
- d. Workers will not be forced or pressured to use contraception.
- e. Workers will not be exposed to hazards, including glues and solvents, that may endanger their safety, including their reproductive health.
- f. Licensees shall provide appropriate services and accommodation to women workers in connection with pregnancy.

IV. Compliance and Disclosure: Licensees (for themselves and on behalf of their contractors, subcontractors, or manufacturers) shall disclose to the Worker Rights Consortium, the University, and the public the information set forth in Sections A, B, and C below.

A. Upon execution and renewal of the License Agreement and upon the selection of any new manufacturing facility which produces Licensed Articles, the company names, contacts, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and nature of the business association for all such facilities which produce Licensed Articles;

B. at least sixty (60) days prior to the end of each contract year of the License Agreement, written assurance that (i) Licensees are in compliance with the Code and/or (ii) licensees are taking reasonable steps to remedy non-compliance in facilities found not to be in compliance with the code;

C. at least sixty (60) days prior to the end of each contract year of the License Agreement, a summary of those steps taken to remedy material violations, and/or difficulties encountered, during the preceding year in implementing and enforcing the Code at all of Licensees' facilities which produce Licensed Articles.

V. Verification: It shall be the responsibility of Licensees (for themselves and on behalf of their contractors, subcontractors, or manufacturers) to ensure their compliance with the Code. The WRC and its Member Institutions will undertake efforts to determine and clearly define the obligations associated with the development of adequate methods and training for independent external monitoring, as guided by the principles in the founding document of the Consortium.

VI. Labor Standards Environment: In countries where law or practice conflicts with these labor standards, Licensees agree to consult with governmental, human rights, labor and business organizations and to take effective actions as evaluated by the University to achieve full compliance with each of these standards. Licensees further agree to refrain from any actions that would diminish the protections of these labor standards. In addition to all other rights under the Licensing Agreement, the University reserves the right to refuse renewal of Licensing Agreements for goods made in countries where:

A. progress toward implementation of the employment standards in the Code is no longer being made; and

B. compliance with the employment standards in the Code is deemed impossible. The University shall make such determinations based upon examination of reports from governmental, human rights, labor and business organizations and after consultation with the relevant Licensees.

VII. Remediation: Remedies herein apply to violations which occur after the Effective Date of the Code.

A. If a Licensee has failed to self-correct a violation of the Code, the University will consult with the Licensee (for itself and on behalf of its contractors, subcontractors, or manufacturers) to determine appropriate corrective action.

B. The remedy will, at a minimum, include requiring the licensee to take all steps necessary to correct such violations including, without limitation:

1. Paying all applicable back wages found due to workers who manufactured the licensed articles.

2. Reinstatement of any worker found to have been unlawfully dismissed.

C. If agreement on corrective action is not reached, and/or the action does not result in correction of the violation within a specified reasonable time period, the University reserves the right to

1. require that the Licensee terminate its relationship with any contractor, subcontractor, or manufacturer that continues to conduct its business in violation of the Code, and/or

2. terminate its relationship with any Licensee that continues to conduct its business in violation of the Code.

D. In either event, the University will provide the y will seek advice from the Worker Rights Consortium regarding possible corrective measures and invocation of options 1 and 2 above.

Alliance Building Committee Mission Statement

The Alliance Building Committee strives to help USAS avoid falling into the patterns of privilege through caucuses; to ensure that caucuses are given adequate time and space to be heard as empowered national bodies, to meet at national and regional USAS conferences and to meet independently during the school year to develop an agenda; to ensure they are empowered to influence USAS' program and the way the program is implemented.

The Alliance Building Committee strives to ensure representation of all the students in USAS in the Coordinating Committee, as Regional Organizers, in committees of the Coordinating Committee, in leadership roles nationally and regionally and at national and regional gatherings; to make these spaces as accessible and safe as possible for all students.

The Alliance Building Committee strives to educate the students of USAS about the caucus structure, the ways in which caucuses function, and why they are necessary; to collect and distribute literature on racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism and being an ally; to incorporate this education into USAS' program.

The Alliance Building Committee seeks to build alliances with other organizations fighting racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism; to support and encourage individual caucuses to work in coalition with other organizations with a shared mission.

USAS Anti-Oppression Definitions

This glossary is a work in progress, compiled from many sources (see end of document). It is intended to help make some commonly used language clearer and more accessible, and not everyone in USAS agrees or has to agree with them. These concepts are complex so these definitions only begin to raise some of the issues that come up when we organize – hopefully they will be helpful rather than limiting. This is a tool to be used alongside other forms of education and action because we understand that definitions alone do not constitute anti-oppressive organizing. Please send comments and feedback about to organize@usasnet.org.

Oppression: Oppression = prejudice + power. Oppression is the acts and effects of domination, including ideological domination and institutional control. In the US there are many forms of often interlocking systems of oppression: racism, imperialism, patriarchy, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, etc. These are interlocking societal, economic, moral, and religious values that keep many groups of people down to ensure the power and advantage of a few groups or one group of people.

Prejudice: A set of negative personal beliefs about a social group that leads individuals to prejudge people from that group or the group in general, regardless of individual differences among members of that target group.

Power: “Power” is a relational term. It is a relationship between human beings in a specific historical, economic, and social setting. It must be exercised to be visible. Power usually implies access to systems, groups, and individuals which own and control the resources of the state. Sometimes defined as “the capacity to make and enforce decisions.” Power can also be defined as individuals or groups’ “creative capacity to act.” (From CWS Workshop)

Privilege: Situations where one group has advantages that others do not receive based on their membership in a societal group. Also, a right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by

one societal group above and beyond the common advantage of all other groups. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.

Ally: A person who actively works to eliminate the oppression and marginalization of people within an identity group of which they do not self-identify. This includes educating oneself and others, providing support to individuals, and challenging oppressive remarks, behaviors, policies, and institutional structures.

Collusion: Thinking and acting in ways which support systems of oppression. Using racism as an example, both white people and people of color can collude with racism through their attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Based on the concept that working against oppression must be active whereas supporting systems of oppression can be “active” or “passive,” just as privilege can be visible or invisible.

Multiple Identities: The concept that a person's identity does not rest on solely one factor, e.g., sexual preference, race, gender, etc. Hence, no single element of one's identity is necessarily supreme, although certain identities can take precedence over others at certain times. (From SOA-Watch)

In Alphabetical Order:

Ableism: Discrimination and oppression against people who have mental, emotional, and physical dis/abilities. Deeply rooted in the belief that people whose physical, emotional, cognitive, or sensory abilities fall outside the scope of what is currently defined as socially acceptable cannot be productive members of society. Gives power and privilege to temporarily-able-bodied people.

Ageism: The pervasive oppression of people based on their age – privileges middle-aged adults at the expense of youth and seniors. Discrimination comes from the societal myth that older and younger people cannot perform certain cognitive or affective standards in the same way simply because they are younger or older.

Assigned Sex: The sex (female, male) assigned at birth based on the appearance of genitalia.

Capitalism: An economic and social system that creates mass poverty by taking away resources from many people (often people in groups kept down by other systems as well) and concentrating them in the hands of a few people. This system grants power to those who own the resources, while punishing those who don't.

Class: Class is an artificially constructed classification of people due to their real or perceived economic and/or social status and/or background. Factors that influence class can include income, economic background, education, geographic location, and cultural factors.

Classism: Personal and institutional discrimination against people because of their real or perceived economic status or background. Puts power and privilege in the hands of middle class and economically wealthy people at the expense of working class and poor people; places higher value on particular art forms, educational systems, etc. that come from and benefit the upper classes.

Gender Binary: A system of oppression that requires everyone to be raised either male or female, and masculine or feminine. Privileges males and masculinity over females and femininity. Eliminates the possibility for other gender expressions, and gives power to people whose genders do not break gender norms at the expense of transgender and intersex people.

Gender Expression: The way one presents themselves to the world, as either masculine or feminine, or both or neither.

Gender Identity: How a person thinks about themselves in terms of gender, as opposed to what others observe or think about them. This can include identifying with masculinity, femininity, both, or neither. Gender identity is also often conflated with sexual orientation, but this is inaccurate. Gender identity does not cause sexual orientation – for example, a masculine woman is not necessarily a lesbian. Gender identity can also change over time.

Gender Oppression: Oppression of women and transgender people because of the gender binary system, gender roles and norms. Privileges non-trans men, people who appear to be men, and people raised as men. Sexism and transphobia are two forms of gender oppression.

Gender Roles: Cultural norms dictating how “men” and “women” are supposed to behave and look in a society. Expects people to have certain personality characteristics, act, and dress a certain way based on their assigned sex. Labels these behaviors as either masculine or feminine.

Gender: Gender refers to what a society deems “masculine” or “feminine.” Gender identity refers to an individual’s self-identification as a man, woman, transgender person, or other identity. Gender is socially and culturally produced/constructed, as opposed to being fixed, static, and coherent.

Genderqueer: A person who redefines or plays with gender norms, or who refuses the gender binary altogether. A label for people who bend/break the rules of gender and blur the boundaries.

Gender-variant: Displaying gender traits that are not normatively associated with one’s assigned sex. “Feminine” behavior or appearance in a male is gender-variant as is “masculine” behavior or appearance a female.

Heterosexism: A system of oppression that gives power to straight people at the expense of queer people, by saying that heterosexuality is the only form of healthy sexual expression. Includes societal, cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that assume that heterosexuality is the only natural, normal, and acceptable sexual orientation. Can manifest itself as homophobia.

Homophobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people or of any behavior that is outside of the boundaries of “traditional” heterosexual roles and relationships. This can range from fear of association with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, to telling jokes about LGBTQ people, to physical violence against people thought to be LGBTQ.

Intersex: Intersexuality is a set of medical conditions that feature congenital “anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system.” That is, intersex people are born with “sex chromosomes,” external genitalia, and/or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “standard” for either male or female. (Gathered from The Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org)

MTF/FTM or M2F/F2M: Terms for gender identity, gender presentation, and/or sex of Male-to-Female and Female-to-Male transgender or transsexual people.

Queer: A reclaimed word from the derogatory context meaning “strange” or “peculiar.” Usually used in two different ways: 1. As an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other people who are marginalized on the basis of sexual orientation. 2. As a political identity, to self-identify with a radical politics of sexuality, including but not limited to LGBT identities.

Race: A specious classification of human beings created by Europeans (whites) which assigns human worth and social status using ‘white’ as the model of humanity for the purpose of

establishing and maintaining racism, power, and privilege. Thus, race is socially constructed but has real impacts on people's everyday lives.

Racism: Racism = Race prejudice + Power. The systematic, unfair distribution of power and opportunity in the hands of 'white people' at the expense of 'people of color' and multiethnic people. Occurs through institutionalized practices, policies, and procedures as well as cultural norms, values, and expectations. Manifestations of racism range from denial of opportunities to extreme physical violence.

Religious oppression: The oppression of individuals and groups based on their religious beliefs or culture. Power is in the hands of Christians and Christian customs and traditions are normalized and ingrained in many aspects of society (e.g. swearing on the Bible in court).

Sexism: Sexism = power + prejudice against women and people perceived as female. Within the gender binary system, sexism refers to the oppression of women by men in a patriarchal society.

Tokenizing: The action of making a member of a marginalized and/or oppressed group a spokesperson for that entire group, usually for the benefit of a larger, more privileged group.

Transgender: Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the social expectations for the sex they were assigned at birth. Depending on who you ask, this may or may not include genderqueer people, transsexual people, genderfuck people, crossdressers, non-gendered people, bi-gendered people, gender-variant people, passing women, passing men, drag queens/kings, and people who identify as neither female nor male or as neither a man nor a woman. It is important to acknowledge that while some people may fit under this definition of transgender, they may not identify as such. Transgender is not a sexual orientation.

Transphobia: Discrimination, fear or hatred of people who blur traditional gender lines that results from the gender binary system. Often comes from non-trans-identified people's own insecurity about being a "real man," or a "real woman."

Transsexual: Refers to a person who lives, plans to live, or desires to live as the gender opposite the one assigned to them at birth. Transsexuals sometimes undergo medical treatment to change their assigned sex to match their sex identity through hormone treatments and/or surgically. Not all transsexual people are able to have, can afford to have, or desire to have surgery.

More Resources:

"Non-ruling class white people in the U.S. are both oppressed and privileged. They are oppressed most significantly on the basis of class, gender, and sexual orientation and also on the basis of religion, culture, ethnicity, age, physical abilities, and political expression. At the same time they are all privileged in relation to peoples of color." – Challenging White Supremacy Workshop

"Never use the prefixes "bio" or "genetic" to differentiate between people who are trans and people who are not trans. For example, never say "I know a girl, she is a bio-female" or "I know this guy, he is a genetic male". Instead say, "I know a non-trans girl" or "I know a non-trans guy". We use the term "non-trans" because as trans people we are "bio"logical and we are genetic; insinuating otherwise takes away from our rights as humans." – strap-on.org

"Never uses the phrase "female bodied" or "male bodied" to point out that someone is trans. Don't talk about people's bodies unless you have their permission. Whether someone is

“female” or “male” is something that only that person has the right to discuss. Feel free to call yourself “male bodied” or “female bodied” if you want to. If you are talking about someone else and you want to say that they were labeled female or male at birth and have since then come to identify as a different sex, just say “female assigned” or “male assigned”.” – strap-on.org

School of the Americas Watch Anti-Oppression Working Group has a long list of definitions: www.soaw.org/new/article.php?id=629.

Sources: The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond; United States Student Association; School of the Americas Watch Anti-Oppression Working Group; Challenging White Supremacy Workshop; RESYST; Oberlin College Multicultural Resource Center; and USAS members.

The USAS Guide to Caucuses:

Why we have them, What they do.

Sexism, racism, heterosexism, and classism are all realities in our society and elsewhere. We cannot deny that certain groups of people lack the power and privileges that other groups benefit from every day. In order to create a sustainable, real movement against economic oppression, whether in sweatshops abroad or unjust labor practices here, it is our responsibility to examine how all forms of oppression are interconnected and how they work with and in economics, society, and our own organization to further exploitation and oppression. This guide will explain, in part, how USAS addresses these issues.

Historically, the leadership of the mainstream social justice movement—including USAS—has tended to be mostly white, mostly male, and mostly people of affluence, which leaves out some of the groups of people most affected by economic injustice, like communities of color. Racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism (among other forms of oppression) pose a threat to the work of USAS just as the pose a threat to justice everywhere. Oppression separates us and prevents certain people’s voices from being heard. As part of our commitment to uprooting injustices, USAS incorporates Caucuses and Allies into its structure.

What is a Caucus?

USAS defines a caucus as a space to address the oppression of minority and marginalized groups within society and often even within social movements. Simply put, a caucus is a safe space for people facing different forms of identity-based oppression—sexism, racism, heterosexism, or classism—to meet and discuss how this oppression affects them both within and outside of USAS. Membership in a caucus is self-defined. No one should feel the need to prove their identity; however, it is important that everyone respects the need for marginalized groups of people to have safe spaces. As difficult as it may seem, this means that if you are white, you should not join the People of Color Caucus even if you believe in color-blindness and celebrating diversity. You should respect the right of people of color — or womyn/genderqueer, queer, and working class folks — within USAS to create their own safe space.

On the national level, USAS has four Caucuses: the Womyn/Genderqueer Caucus, the People of Color Caucus, the Queer Caucus, and the Working Class Caucus. Each caucus elects a representative to the Coordinating Committee (the student leadership/decision making body) who is accountable to the caucus.

Caucuses have scheduled meetings at national gatherings and regional conferences. All information shared in a Caucus meeting is private, unless its members agree to share it with the larger group. The group should decide by consensus on what to report back during a unity meeting (meeting of the allies and caucus), though individuals should feel free to share their own contributions.

What is an Ally or Allie’s meeting?

Central to fighting all forms of oppression is recognizing that they aren’t just issues for oppressed peoples to fight. Think about it: would it be possible to end racism if white people weren’t involved in the struggle and challenging other white people to do the same? Wouldn’t it be pretty hard to end classism if only the poorest folks were fighting? For this reason, USAS has Allies’ Meetings that correspond to each of its caucuses. The purpose of an allies’ meeting for its members to discuss the role that they play in both ending oppression and perpetuating it. The allies meet in relation to each caucus, and are open. This means that a person of color is

welcome to attend an allies' meeting, while a white person is not welcome in the safe space of a caucus.

Like caucuses, all information shared in an ally's meeting is private, unless members agree to share it. The group should decide whether to report their discussion back to the large group, but individuals, of course, can share their own contributions at will. Allies are as important as caucuses in terms of fighting oppression. It is important that allies take themselves seriously and not treat their meetings as optional or as an opportunity to socialize and relax.

What are we supposed to talk about, anyway?

Though we need to recognize the role that oppression plays in our society as a whole, an important purpose of USAS's caucuses and allies is to explore how oppression works within our organization. This may include blatant forms of oppression like hate crimes, rape, and racist language, or more subtle (yet more pervasive) forms, such as meeting dynamics, leadership, representation, misuse of power, and so-forth. In most cases, the Coordinating Committee representative to the caucus will facilitate a discussion and training and a corresponding discussion will be facilitated for the allies.

Caucus and allies meetings can focus on other things, too. Members could decide to meet and talk about a campaign they want USAS to endorse or a project that they would like to undertake. They may design presentations or information to make available to other members of USAS. In the spring of 2003, members of the Womyn/Genderqueer Caucus meet to discuss its mission and define itself. The structure, scope, and agenda of caucuses and allies are ultimately decided by the USASers who are part of these groups.

If we're supposed to end oppression together, why are we meeting separately?

Though it is very important for everyone to fight oppression, oppressed groups of people need to have a space to discuss issues that they may not feel comfortable sharing with the whole group and to organize around issues that affect them the most. Often, it is best if there is a safe space in which they can talk about these things with people who share their experiences.

It is important for the caucuses and allies to have a discussion after they meet separately. Often, there are issues that need to be brought to the attention of the whole group. These group discussions may also be a useful place to discuss concrete action for combating oppression. At national gatherings, there is a unity meeting where we can all report back and discuss the issues raised all together. The talk shouldn't end there, however. We need to incorporate what we realize in our separate meetings into our strategy sessions, our workshops and our discussions over lunch. Oppression doesn't end with meeting; we need to continue the work.

So, do Caucuses and actually do anything but talk?

It is up to the caucus or allies to answer that question, and hopefully the answer will be YES! Caucuses and allies' meetings are a space for action, not just reaction!

One of the most critical functions of Caucuses is insuring that members of the caucus are represented in USAS's regional, national, and grassroots leadership. Each caucus has an accountable leader on the coordinating committee, but representation shouldn't end there. All caucus members are encouraged to take active roles in USAS leadership; apply to be an RO, get involved with national committees, or run for the CC

Members of caucuses and their allies also make really important changes together. Recently, USASers from the Alliance Building Committee the job of drafting a statement in support of Affirmative Action and took action to support the DREAM Act to support immigrant students.

Could my local group organize Caucuses and Allies too?

Sure! Caucuses shouldn't just happen at national gatherings. These identity groups are formed when members decide that it is necessary to start them, and when the rest of USAS makes them feel empowered enough to do so. If you would like to see your local group start Caucuses, we'd be happy to help you with advice, materials, and resources. Just contact USAS's National Office to request materials or to get in touch with people that can help you out.

Starting caucuses and allies in your local group is no simple task. It's important that everyone in the group understands the importance of fighting oppression and how that connects to ecological issues before you decide to hold caucus and allies' meetings. People may be opposed to the idea of caucuses. After all, confronting oppression isn't always fun or comfortable. The important thing to remember is to be patient and stay dedicated. Challenge people to see the effects of oppression on their own lives and on the lives of others.

What about other issues of oppression? Why aren't there caucuses to address them?

USAS recognizes that oppression doesn't end with race, gender, sexuality, and class. While it can be difficult to create Caucuses and Allies based on less blatant forms of oppression, it isn't out of the question. The most important ingredient needed to start something like this is YOU! If you are interested in working to address other issues of oppression, contact USAS's Coordinating Committee or Alliance Building committee. There may be a caucus that incorporates the particular oppression that you wish to address, or there may be a need for a new caucus.

How do I get involved with USAS's Caucuses and Allies?

Glad you asked! If you are interested in taking an active role in USAS's Womyn/Genderqueer Caucus, People of Color Caucus, Queer Caucus, Working Class Caucus, or their allies, please get on the caucus' listserv, or contact the coordinating committee member representative (the most recent info can be found on our website). They'd be happy to help you! USAS's caucuses and allies are always in need of strong leadership. So, if you are committed to working for a more just society, take action! Work to make USAS's Caucus structure reflect this vision.

Is that the end?

Hope this explains things. If you have any questions or would like help in starting your own Caucuses, contact USAS staff and student leadership at organize@usasnet.org, 202-NOSWEAT, visit www.studentsagainstssweatshops.org or send some old fashioned mail to the national office in DC:

1150 17th St. NW Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20036

(much borrowed from SEAC: <http://www.seac.org/about/caucus.shtml> Thanks, SEAC)

Privilege

by an anonymous author

Privilege is simple:

going for a pleasant stroll after dark,
 not checking the back of your car as you get in, sleeping soundly,
 speaking without interruption, and not remembering
 dreams of rape that follow you all day, that wake you up crying, and
 privilege is not seeing your stripped, humiliated body
 plastered in celebration across every magazine rack,
 privilege is going to the movies and
 not seeing yourself terrorized, defamed, battered, butchered
 seeing something else

Privilege is

riding your bicycle through town without being screamed at or run off the road,
 not needing an abortion,
 taking off your shirt on a hot day in a crowd,
 not wishing you could type better just in case – not shaving your legs,
 having a good job and expecting to keep it,
 not feeling the boss's hand up your crotch,
 dozing off on late-night buses,
 privilege is being the hero in the T.V. show, not the dumb broad,
 living where your genitals are totemized not denied,
 knowing your doctor won't rape you
 privilege is being
 smiled at all day by nice, helpful women, it is
 the way you pass judgement on their appearance with magisterial authority,
 the way you face a judge of your own sex in court and
 are overrepresented in Congress and are not assaulted by the police
 or used as a dart board by your friendly mechanic, privilege
 is seeing your bearded face echo through the history texts
 not only of your high school days but all your life, not being relegated to a paragraph every
 other chapter the way you occupy entire poetry books and more than your share of the couch
 unchallenged,
 it is your mouthing smug, atrocious insults at women

who blink and change the subject -- politely –
privilege is how seldom the rapist's name appears in the paper
and the way you smirk over your Playboy
it's simple really, privilege
means someone else's pain, your wealth
is my terror, your uniform
is a woman raped to death here or in Cambodia or wherever
wherever your obscene privilege
writes your name in my blood, it's that simple,
you've always had it, that's why it doesn't
seem to make you sick at the stomach,
you have it, we pay for it,
do you understand?

Racist Activism 101

[or "How to be a Completely Clueless and Aggravating White Activist", or again "How to Get on Nadine's Personal Shit List"]

This article was originally written for the Concordia Student Union Handbook by Nadine

DISCLAIMER: This is far, far FAR from being an exhaustive checklist. Sure, this is my opinion and mine only, but run it by your comrades of colour [I'm sure you've got tons of 'em] and chances are...

Anyhow. Moving on to the to the main topic.

Tactic #1: Learn (and talk) as much as you can about issues affecting a few choice people of colour: Mumia is a good place to start. Quote Che Guevera if you can, and drop references to the Black Panthers in every other sentence. But, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WHATSOEVER shall you:

learn about the histories of local communities of colour;

challenge racism in your activist group;

work with local activists of colour who aren't directly in your group. If you do, make sure that they're invited into an already set activity, where you've already made all important decisions and arrangements. We can't forget who's boss!

Tactic #2: Tell me about your trip to Costa Rica / Ghana / Pakistan where you dug a well / taught English / started a revolution. Tell me how backwards the patriarchal system is there, how the cops there are just so undemocratic, and how astounded you were that the people just accepted this shit. Change the story if you went to Chiapas: those Zapatistas!!!

Tactic #3: Show me how much you appreciate my culture by sporting dreads and stitching patches of Angela Davis onto your clothes. Rebel against Christianity by learning "voodoo" [books will do], and better yet: explain to me exactly how alienated I am because I still keep my "slave name". If the primitive pagan/animistic don't do it for you, try Asian spirituality.

Tactic #4: Try doing this as often as possible (simulated conversation):

Me: "Hi, I'm Nadine."

You: "Oh, I know you. We've already met."

Me: "Uh, I don't think so."

You: "Yeah, we met at Josh's place, at the potluck last week. He introduced us."

Me: "I don't know anyone named Josh, and I was in Haiti last week." You: "Oh, I could have sworn it was you."

You know why you could have sworn it was me? Cuz: we all still look alike to you. Admit it. At least to yourself, if not to me.

Tactic #5: Prove your own lack of racism by explaining how you were raised to believe everyone is equal and therefore you can't be racist. Cement the argument by counting off the number of multicultural endeavors you've embarked on (including the "Reclaim the Streets" fair where people were invited to come in native garb).

Tactic #6: Be really surprised when I tell you I plan to leave Canada and live in a nice Third World country wracked with civil strife, violent crime and 75% rate of unemployment. Wonder why someone would want to leave this racist, capitalistic and consumerist holy land.

I'm kinda bitter. You might even call me a [gasp!] reverse racist. But lemme quote Lonnae O'Neal Parker: "I believe white folks would know if blacks were ever to really reverse racism."

ten ways to tokenize or alienate a non-white person around you

(or, ten examples of the racism we witness on a regular basis)

by basil and billie--with a little help from our friends.

- 1- walk up to that black girl you barely know in the co-op and say "what do you think of the new (insert hip-hop artist here) album."
- 2- ask one of the only arabs in your community to write the article for your newspaper on the situation in palestine.
 - 2a- then, after they write it, take their research, re-write the article and sign your name to it.
- 3- in a big group of many activists, say "how can we bring more people of color into our struggle."
- 4- in a big group of many activists, say "black people don't have the time to care about trees".
- 5- go up to the Makah woman at the unlearning racism workshop and say "I saw a program about Crazy Horse on PBS, he did alot for your people."
- 6- act like the only people of non-white ancestry in your community are the ones visible to you.
 - 6a- assume that light skinned people around you are white without ever knowing their ancestry.
- 7- talk about race as if the only groups are black and white.
 - 7a- talk about race as if the only groups are black, white and hispanic.
 - 7b- talk about race as if the only groups are black, white, hispanic and asian.
 - 7c- talk about race as if the only groups are black, white, hispanic, asian and native american.
- 8- picture a violent, irrational arab every time the word "terrorist" is mentioned. ignore the arabs who do not fit into this stereotype.
- 9- look to a non-white person in the room every time racism is brought up.
 - 9a- make sure they have the last and most defining word on the subject.
 - 9b- sympathetically and silently agree with everything they say.
 - 9c- thank them profusely.
- 10- fearfully avoid assertive non-white people in your community.

Strategies for Being an Effective Ally

Assume that other people in your group also want to be allies to people in oppressed groups. You are not the exception to the rule. Assume you will always have something to learn on how to be a more effective ally. Have confidence in your ability to be an effective ally and to help others be more effective as well.

Assume you have the perfect right to be concerned with other people's liberation issues, and that it is in your interest to do so and to be an ally.

As students in higher education we all have some measure of privilege in this society, and as such we have the ability to be allies to non-privileged groups. Think about the privileged groups you belong to, recognize privilege where you have it.

Recognize that membership in an oppressed group(s) does not absolve you of the responsibility of being an ally to members of an oppressed group to which you do not belong.

Assume that people in the oppressed group want you and members of your group as allies but that their experience of oppression, and previous experiences with members of your group, may make them reluctant to accept you as such. Recognize that considering the history of mistreatment and mistrust between some groups, often actions speak louder than words.

People from oppressed groups are the experts on their own experience, and as an ally you have much to learn from them.

Recognize that as a member of a privileged group you know best how to use your privilege to interrupt oppressive attitudes and behaviors among members of your own group. Recognize that as an ally it is your responsibility to work to improve your ability to do this, and develop other allies by sharing strategies that have worked for you.

Take responsibility for learning about oppressed groups history of struggle and resistance, as well as the history of how allies have engaged in struggle with oppressed groups. Learn as much as you can about issues affecting an oppressed group(s). Seek out information sources (books, magazines, films, courses, other media) that are authored by people from that group. Create opportunities for learning about these issues/ histories for members of your own group through invited speakers, films, forums, book clubs, etc.

Begin to act as an ally now, as best you know how, but be open to criticism and learning. Do not allow the fact that you “do not know enough” be an excuse. Everyone always has more to learn, we learn as we go.

Realize that members of the oppressed group can spot “oppressor-role” conditioning (behavior that perpetuates privilege and oppression). Realize that as a member of a privileged group, often times you do not. Do not try to “convince” them that this conditioning did not happen to you. Don’t attempt to convince members of an oppressed group that you “are on their side”-- just be there, and do work.

Do not expect gratitude from members of the oppressed group. Remember, being an ally is a matter of choice for you, being oppressed is not. If you are committed to social justice being an ally is a responsibility.

Be a 100% ally, no strings. Ex: I’ll oppose your oppression if you oppose mine.” Everyone’s oppression needs to be opposed unconditionally.

“Being an ally” is an action, not a status. If you are not doing something you are not an ally.

Unlearning oppressive behavior is one step towards building a stronger, more inclusive movement for progressive social change; it allows us to communicate and work together better so we may collectively fight oppression better. It is NOT so you can learn to be less personally or overtly prejudiced, or to assuage the guilt you may feel as a member of a privileged group.

Ten Things to Remember:

Anti-Racist Strategies for White Student Radicals

by Chris Dixon

(<http://colours.mahost.org/org/whitestudents.html>)

After many years as a white student radical (in high school and then college), I'm reconsidering my experience. I made a lot of mistakes and was blind in many ways, particularly as a white person. What follows are some lessons that I am learning, some strategies for reflecting on, interrogating, and disrupting racism in our lives.

Transforming the world means challenging and changing institutions and ourselves. Systems of oppression are ingrained in both and, accordingly, must be confronted in both. More than once an activist of color or an actively anti-racist white person has confronted me: "Why are you always rushing off to do solidarity actions with people in other parts of the world when you don't even make time to deal with your own shit?" They're right. As white student activists, we are in fact notorious for protesting injustices across the globe, yet neglecting to confront systems of oppression on our campuses, in our communities, and in ourselves. Being an effective student activist means making priorities, and at times we must prioritize slower-paced, not-so-flashy work over dramatic actions that offer immediate gratification. Being an effective white student activist means prioritizing daily dismantlement of white privilege--creating and participating in forums for whites to grapple with racism, allying with struggles that people of color are engaged in, constantly remaining open to our own mistakes and feedback from others.

Predominantly white activist organizations are built within society as it is and, as a result, are plagued by racism and other forms of oppression. We can minimize or deny this reality ("we're all radicals here, not racists") or we can work to confront it head-on. Confronting it requires not only openly challenging the dynamics of privilege in our groups, but also creating structures and forums for addressing oppression. For instance, two experienced activists I know often point out that, sadly, Kinko's has a better sexual harassment policy than most activist groups. Workers are accountable for their actions and victims have some means of redress. With all of our imaginative alternatives to capitalist and hierarchical social arrangements, I have no doubt that we can construct even more egalitarian and comprehensive ways of dealing with sexism, racism, and other oppressive forces in our organizations. And we must start now.

We absolutely should not be "getting" people of color to join "our" organizations. This is not just superficial; it's tokenistic, insulting, and counterproductive. Yet this is the band-aid that white activists are often quick to apply when accused of racist organizing. Mobilizing for the WTO protests, for example, I had one white organizer reassure me that we didn't need to concern ourselves with racism, but with "better outreach." In his view, the dynamics, priorities, leadership, and organizing style, among other important features of our group, were obviously beyond critical scrutiny. But they shouldn't be. We must always look at our organizations and ourselves first. Whose voices are heard? Whose priorities are adopted? Whose knowledge is valued? The answers to these questions define a group more than how comprehensive its outreach is. Consequently, instead of looking to "recruit" in order to simply increase diversity, we, as white activists, need to turn inward, working to make truly anti-racist, anti-oppressive organizations.

We have much to learn from the leadership of activists of color. As student organizers Amanda Klonsky and Daraka Larimore-Hall write, "Only through accepting the leadership of those who experience racism in their daily lives, can white students identify their role in building an anti-racist movement." Following the lead of people of color is also one active step toward toppling conventional racial hierarchies; and it challenges us, as white folks (particularly men), to step back from aggressively directing everything with an overwhelming sense of entitlement. Too often white students covet and grasp leadership positions in large campus activist groups and coalitions. As in every other sector of our society, myths of "merit" cloak these racial dynamics, but in reality existing student leaders aren't necessarily the "best" leaders; rather, they're frequently people who have enjoyed lifelong access to leadership skills and positions--largely white, middle-class men. We need to strengthen the practice of following the lead of activists of color. We'll be rewarded with, among other things, good training working as authentic allies rather than patronizing "friends"; for being an ally means giving assistance when and as asked.

As white activists, we need to shut up and listen to people of color, especially when they offer criticism. We have to override initial defensive impulses and keep our mouths tightly shut, except perhaps to ask clarifying questions. No matter how well-intentioned and conscientious we are, notice how much space we (specifically white men) occupy with our daily, self-important jabber. Notice how we assume that we're entitled to it. When people of color intervene in that space to offer something, particularly something about how we can be better activists and better people, that is a very special gift. Indeed, we need to recognize such moments for what they are: precious opportunities for us to become more effective anti-racists. Remember to graciously listen and apply lessons learned.

White guilt always gets in the way. Anarcha-feminist Carol Ehrlich explains, "Guilt leads to inaction. Only action, to re-invent the everyday and make it something else, will change social relations." In other words, guilt doesn't help anyone, and it frequently just inspires navel-gazing. The people who experience the brunt of white supremacy could care less whether we, as white activists, feel guilty. Guilt doesn't change police brutality and occupation, nor does it alter a history of colonialism, genocide, and slavery. No, what we really have to offer is our daily commitment and actions to resist racism. And action isn't just protesting. It includes any number of ways that we challenge the world and ourselves. Pushing each other to seriously consider racism is action, as are grappling with privilege and acting as allies. Only through action, and the mistakes we make and the lessons we learn, can we find ways to work in true solidarity.

"Radical" doesn't necessarily mean getting arrested, engaging in police confrontations, or taking to the streets. These kinds of actions are important, but they're not the be-all and end-all of effective activism. Indeed, exclusively focusing on them ignores crucial questions of privilege and overlooks the diverse, radical ways that people resist oppression every day. In the wake of the WTO protests, for instance, many white activists are heavily focused on direct action. Yet in the words of anti-capitalist organizer Helen Luu, "the emphasis on this method alone often works to exclude people of colour because what is not being taken into account is the relationship between the racist (in)justice system and people of colour." Moreover, this emphasis can exclude the very radical demands, tactics, and kinds of organizing used by communities of color--struggling for police accountability, occupying ancestral lands, and challenging multinational polluters, among many others. All too frequently "radicalism" is defined almost solely by white, middle-class men. We can do better, though; and I mean we in the sense of all of us who struggle in diverse ways to go to the root--to dismantle power and privilege, and fundamentally transform our society.

Radical rhetoric, whether it's Marxist, anarchist, Situationist, or some dialect of activist speak, can be profoundly alienating and can uphold white privilege. More than once, I've seen white radicals (myself included) take refuge in our own ostensibly liberatory rhetorical and analytical tools: Marxists ignoring "divisive" issues of cultural identity and autonomy; anarchists assuming that, since their groups have "no hierarchy," they don't need to worry about insuring space for the voices of folks who are traditionally marginalized; Situationist-inspired militants collapsing diverse systems of privilege and oppression into obscure generalizations; radical animal rights activists claiming that they obviously know better than communities of color. And this is unfortunately nothing new. While all of these analytical tools have value, like most tools, they can be used to uphold oppression even as they profess to resist it. Stay wary.

We simply cannot limit our anti-oppression work to the struggle against white supremacy. Systems of oppression and privilege intertwine and operate in extremely complex ways throughout our society. Racism, patriarchy, classism, heterosexism, able-ism, ageism, and others compound and extend into all spheres of our lives. Our activism often takes the form of focusing on one outgrowth at a time--combating prison construction, opposing corporate exploitation of low-wage workers, challenging devastating US foreign policies. Yet we have to continually integrate a holistic understanding of oppression and how it operates--in these instances, how state repression, capitalism, and imperialism rest on oppression and privilege. Otherwise, despite all of our so-called radicalism, we risk becoming dangerously myopic single-issue activists. "Watch these mono-issue people," warns veteran activist Bernice Johnson Reagon. "They ain't gonna do you no good." Whatever our chosen focuses as activists, we must work both to recognize diverse forms of oppression and to challenge them--in our society, our organizations, and ourselves.

We need to do all of this anti-racist, anti-oppressive work out of respect for ourselves as well as others. White supremacy is our problem as white people. We benefit from it and are therefore obligated to challenge it. This is no simplistic politics of guilt, though. People of color undeniably suffer the most from racism, but we are desensitized and scarred in the process. Struggling to become authentically anti-racist radicals and to fundamentally change our racist society, then, means reclaiming our essential humanity while forging transformative bonds of solidarity. In the end, we'll be freer for it.

Ain't Gonna Let Segregation Turn Us 'Round: Thoughts on Building an Interracial and Anti-Racist Student Movement

by Amanda Klonsky and Daraka Larimore-Hall

(<http://colours.mahost.org/articles/amandaraka.html>)

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In the summer following his junior year of college, together with nearly one thousand other Northern college students, Andy Goodman traveled to Mississippi to participate in Freedom Summer 1964. Organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Freedom Summer was a call to Northern white college students to join black Mississippians in the drive to register black voters in the South. SNCC staff members last reported seeing Andy, along with his friends Mickey Schwerner and James Cheney, alive on June 21st, 1964. The three activists were found dead weeks later. Lawrence Rainey, then Neshoba County sheriff, was one of seven men later convicted, not of murder, but of "conspiracy to deprive the dead men of their civil rights" (pg. 115, *In Struggle*, by Clayborne Carson). Andy Goodman made a heroic decision and cast his fate with the Black Freedom Struggle in the Jim Crow South. He became one of many martyrs; a symbol for people working towards racial justice in the United States.

If you believe what you read in the press, both mainstream and left, the recent rise in political activism has been composed solely of white people who oppose globalization. While the coverage of political activism tends to ignore the rich and inspiring work that goes on in communities of color, it is true that white students are on the march, and largely overlooking questions of domestic racism in favor of internationally flavored anti-corporate activism. People of color (as well as the mainstream media) have noticed with some distaste the overwhelming whiteness of the protests in Seattle and D.C. (See for example Elizabeth Betita Martinez's article "Where Was the Color in Seattle?") The activist causes and organizations receiving the most attention, funding and support on campuses are predominantly white anti-corporate and anti-sweatshop groups, while organizing in communities of color has been routinely ignored.

While it is tempting to simply obsess over the whiteness of campus anti-corporate activism, we believe that such obsession makes us miss the most important point. Both on a practical level, in terms of building good relationships with campus-based organizations of color, and on a political level, in terms of making an anti-corporate vision meaningful, white students have to take up the fight against racism in a serious way. This means, if you are a white activist, incorporating anti-racism into your own work, and doing work against racism that you do not yourself lead.

The leadership of many predominantly white student organizations have begun to discuss how the white portion of an expanding student movement can adopt an explicitly anti-racist agenda. Some of these organizations, such as the Direct Action Network and United Students Against Sweatshops, are beginning to discuss how to confront racism with their activist work.

The coalitions mobilizing protests at both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions have focused their attentions on issues facing Black and Latino communities, and have begun to reach out to activists within those communities. Despite their good intentions, however, these efforts have not gone far enough. To succeed, we must transform more than our slogans and symbols; committing for the long haul to fighting against, for example, the proliferation of the prison industry, or fighting for equitable funding of public education. While this is the beginning of new direction and dialogue, we still have a long way to go.

We do not claim to have forged a magic bullet, but we would like to raise some questions which may point our organizations in the right direction. In considering the role of white students in opposing racism, we should remember the story of Andy Goodman and his sacrifice. Let us ask ourselves what the equivalent of Freedom Summer is today. Where are the spaces for white students to act in solidarity with the struggles of people of color; to assist in building an anti racist movement led by people of color? Where are our Mississippis, and who is going down to help?

White students cannot answer this question alone. Only through accepting the leadership of those who experience racism in their daily lives, can white students identify their role in building an anti-racist movement.

As a white woman, I (Amanda) have been very much a part of the anti-sweatshop movement at the University of Wisconsin. The growing anti-sweatshop movement is fundamentally good, and it has been a powerful force on our campus. Many students who have never participated in social justice work before have gotten involved, breathing new life into campus activism.

While it is right to organize in solidarity with exploited workers of color in the Third World and at home, as the anti-sweatshop movement grows, we have a responsibility to make sure that we take on local racial justice issues as well as international ones. On campuses like UW Madison, white students have too often ignored this responsibility. Because such an overwhelming majority of most college campuses are made up of white students, it is very difficult for students of color to make gains without white support. This is especially true around such issues as increasing recruitment and retention of students of color or the creation of a long sought after Chicano Studies Department.

This is not to say that anti-sweatshop organizing in Madison should end; but simply that we must take another step forward, connecting the work we are doing to oppose discrimination around the globe with that which is happening in our own communities for students and faculty of color. For example, in prior years at the UW, white students, as part of an interracial coalition assisted in a successful campaign led by people of color to strengthen the University's ten year affirmative action plan.

Let's work so that our anti-sweatshop organizations are explicitly anti-racist, and build a committed and long standing relationship with the communities affected by oppressive labor standards; namely immigrants and women. This work will bring issues of racism to bear on what has been seen, incorrectly, as a "white" organizing issue.

The Color Line Divides America, As Well As The Student Movement

Because racism is such a powerful force in our economic and social systems, it is ridiculous to think the student movement could somehow be immune or disconnected from the legacy and consequences of racism. Social justice movements in this country have at many other points in history been divided along racial lines. This has happened both because of white racism, and because of the legitimate desire on the part of activists of color to build independent organizations.

It's a mistake to feel like every student activist organization should look like a Benetton ad. We should not approach this whole question with the goal of simply "diversifying" our organizations. This article is not a guide to "shopping for minorities." It is a call to action for white students to put real work behind the fight against racism.

White students should respect the expressed need and desire for separation by student of color activist groups. Of course, none of the "predominantly white" student movement organizations

out there are exclusively white, and there are some practical things that white activists can do to make their organizations a better place to work for people of color. All white people enjoy the fruits of racism, both historical and contemporary, psychologically and spiritually as well as politically and economically. White people need to break down the structures and change the institutions which give them privilege. If we are truly committed to building an inter-racial movement, then white people must constantly assess their privileged position in society.

We think that the most important thing white students can do to build an interracial and anti-racist movement in this country is to stand in solidarity with people of color who are organizing against racism. Concretely, this will require white students to take direction and leadership from people of color, but it also means that white students have a special duty to exercise leadership amongst white people, fighting racism in our own communities. This is no simple task; there are no rules or formulas for being a good white ally, and standing in solidarity with people of color has meant many wildly different things throughout history. It is likely that in twenty years, we will look back and laugh at the positions we are taking in this very article. Let us seek guidance in the history of anti-racist organizing in this country; becoming students of the interracial and anti-racist movements that have come before us.

Practical Suggestions

Here are some steps that white students can take to begin the process of building an anti-racist movement:

Include racial justice issues in your organizational discussions and analysis.

Commit to doing serious work against racism as part of your organizing and to forming meaningful, principled alliances with people of color organizations in your communities.

Make sure that your agenda isn't set before considering the goals and demands of activists of color. Too often, white activists think of the issues that they are working on as "universal" and approach activists of color asking them to join their "big tent". Why aren't white activists holding themselves accountable in the same way and viewing racism as a universal concern?

Take steps to create a more tolerant culture within your own organization. Sometimes, white culture is "invisible", meaning that methods of work, choice of music, food, ways of communicating, etc., are thought of as "progressive" ways of doing things, instead of "white progressive" ways of doing things.

One way should not be held up as "authentically progressive", especially when that cultural form is typically or historically white.

Consider the needs of people of different backgrounds than your own. Can people with jobs attend your meetings? What about people with children? What email list or social scene do you have to be a part of, to hear about meetings?

Work to build long term, authentic and trusting relationships with organizations led by people of color in your community. As we stated above, white activists are prone to "shopping" for minorities. Too often, when it comes time to host a conference or chose speakers for a rally, white activist organizations are out looking for brown faces, when they haven't supported the daily work of anti-racist organizations all year long.

Speak up when people of color in your community are being attacked! Don't wait for the Black Student Union on your campus to write all the letters to the editor of your student newspaper. It is time for white people to police their own communities around these issues - after all, whose responsibility is it to fight racism in the white community?

Listen harder, and better. Too often, white activists try to be the savior - instead of the ally. One of the legacies of the early Civil Rights Movement's organizing style, which came from people like Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and Bob Moses of SNCC, was the deeply rooted belief that there is no one who knows more about the experience of oppression than those who are oppressed themselves. Simply put, go to meetings of people of color organizations, find out what they are up to, and help out. Period.

Working in an interracial coalition can be a difficult and humbling experience, but also a sweet one. The most important things we should take with us on this winding road are a willingness to be vulnerable, to make mistakes and be self critical, and to listen to each other. We have a lot to learn, and we need all the brains and hands we can gather. Within the movement, as in the civil rights movement of the 60s, we need a "division of labor," in which the special responsibilities of various groups are recognized. Andy Goodman was one of the many who acknowledged his own responsibility and sought to accept leadership from African American activists. To broaden and deepen today's movement, we need to learn from that spirit of listening, uniting and acting with courage.

Intersections: Organizing All the Oppressed To End All Our Oppressions

by Malik Guevara, courtesy of Freedom Road

(<http://colours.mahost.org/articles/guevara.html>)

What I hope to do in this presentation is to underscore a number of points that have already been made, to elaborate a bit on them, and to add a few new ones. The several points I wish to discuss are as follows:

- ★ the need for us to grasp, theoretically and politically speaking, the intersection and interpenetration of multiple principles of social organization such as race, gender, sexuality and class, in US society;
- ★ the fact that oppression and abuse are basically identical in their effects upon human groups and individuals in US society;
- ★ the reality that patriarchy is not only about how men treat, and mistreat, women and girls; but also about how males treat other males; and
- ★ the necessity to remember that if we are to truly be/come revolutionaries, we must learn how to organize all our oppressed to end all our oppressions.

I will try to make my remarks as brief and substantive as possible given our time constraints. I'd like to touch on each of the above issues in turn.

The Interconnections between Oppressions

There are at least two crucial points to be made regarding the meaning of "intersectionality," or "simultaneity," as the concept was originally articulated during the 1970s by the African-American feminists of the Combahee River Collective. First, the concept of simultaneity, or intersectionality, refers to the fact that multiple principles of social organization operate within the same social and institutional spaces [1] in which we live and work in this country. The second point is that none of these principles of social organization (which can also be understood as forms of oppression and principles, or poles, of identity formation) operates independently of the others, but, rather, each operates interdependently [2] with all the others. Another way of conveying the same meaning is to say that race, class, sexuality, and gender never exist in society or social situations in isolation from one another. Instead, the impact of each principle or form is always influenced or shaped by all the others. Let us consider these two points more closely.

When we usually think about slavery in the United States, many of us (perhaps even most) think of it as a terrible and multi-faceted reflection of the myriad ways in which race served as a foundational principle for conceiving, creating, and maintaining peculiar kinds of societal arrangements. Despite the fact that social science scholars and social activists alike have often underestimated the role of race in the United States [3], we nonetheless regard race as central to the dirty business of buying, selling, and using certain groups of human beings to benefit other groups of human beings. Yet in all of our careful analysis of slavery, we often overlook and underestimate the fact that slavery was not merely a consequence of calculations based upon race. Slavery also established standards, conventions, structures, processes, and ideals that were expressions of gender, sexuality, and class. The establishment of relations of oppression that were raced, gendered, sexualized, and classed occurred simultaneously, within and often through the same or similar structures, social processes, and stereotypes! Even if the varied

expressions of discrete principles of organization occurred with unequal prominence within particular social contexts, these expressions occurred interdependently--shaping, and shaped by, one another.

The fact that we do not customarily "see" this complex intersection and interaction of types of domination should not be taken to mean that the interdependence does not exist. We continually fail to clearly see this intersection and interdependence largely because of our institutional conditioning, and the partial and narrow ways that we sometimes apprehend social reality. Looking closely at our own lives, we can see that our own racial identities cannot be understood in isolation from our identities as classed, gendered, and sexualized beings in this social order.

Many of us have evolved politically during the past several decades holding to the notion that oppression is most usefully understood as rooted in a single principle of social organization--class--and that everything else that undermines our humanity flows from the operation of this single principle of stratification. This is a very problematic notion that has been repeatedly addressed by numerous activists within civil society. Some have been Marxists. Others have not. Yet there is much that we can and should learn even from a number of writers who have not been Marxists--if we are serious about "Left Refoundation." In fact, if Left Refoundation means anything at all, one of its requirements is that those who intend to use Marxism to make revolution within the United States must expand our understanding of the terrain of oppression and resistance within which that revolution must be grounded.

The past three decades or so has witnessed considerable investigation and analysis by feminists--especially feminists of color--in the United States [4] that provide us with new points of departure for understanding more fully the complex ways in which oppressions operate. Many of us are quite unaware of these contributions, largely as a consequence of the theoretical, political, and organizational narrowness of the different organizations and movements from which we have emerged. Yet the fact that many of us may as yet be unaware of the contributions of feminists in this country does not render those contributions meaningless or irrelevant. We might also want to take a moment of humble reflection to remember that in the absence of conscious struggles to understand and embody feminist insights, many of us have unwittingly reinforced the very kinds of structures, processes and ideals that feminists have been trying to critique! Provided that we are willing to "see" the privileges of gender and sexuality (and of race and class) from which we unwittingly benefit, there is much that we can still learn from certain feminist analyses of oppression about how to advance a politics inclusive enough to help us connect more deeply and broadly with the masses of our people with whom we must make the revolution.

We must now rethink the silences and exclusions that have characterized "radical" organizations of the Left for so long. We must be honest (and yes, self-critical) about the fact that a number of willing fighters have left organizations--including this organization--or declined to join their ranks. And we must honestly and carefully acknowledge that a number of comrades have moved on, not because they have been counter-revolutionary or divisive, but because the theoretical grasp of oppressions so often set forth by numerous contemporary movement organizations[5] has not adequately acknowledged the conditions of their lived experiences. And if our theoretical grasp has not enabled us to adequately acknowledge and illuminate certain experiences, then it is understandable that our day-to-day politics of movement-building have not been capable of reflecting and informing the lives of a number of people.

We must therefore ask ourselves how we could have expected to advance political plans and projects that reflect the needs, hopes, and visions of those so continually excluded and/or

marginalized. Undoubtedly, a number of sincere people have not seen any way to bring all of themselves into this organization, or the movements we have been trying to build. How can anyone be expected to willingly enter, or remain within, an organization or movement-information which requires (consciously or unconsciously) that s/he downplay or ignore or reject certain "unacceptable" aspects of her/his lived experience to become a "comrade"?

Here we will do well to ask ourselves why it is that the received wisdom of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao, and others has seldom adequately addressed the ways in which race and gender and sexuality have shaped class experience, while also being shaped by it? It is at least partly because our revolutionary forefathers have seldom acknowledged the importance of considering the theoretical, and thus the political, centrality of understanding the intersection of multiple forms of oppression.[6] This brings us to a very important concern that is currently troubling a number of us.

A number of comrades are concerned that if we begin to acknowledge the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, and class, we will be sliding down a slippery slope of making these principles of social organization and oppression equally significant. Moreover, if these forms of oppression are equal in their presence and power in our lives, how can we possibly think, speak, or act to address what we have for so long interpreted as "the principal contradiction"? Perhaps we should pause here to distinguish between the significance of given forms of oppression (as forces that shape and damage people's lives) and the salience of these forms (as reflections of how oppression works) in particular societal circumstances and encounters.

Numerous feminists during the past three decades have tried to underscore the fact that while ALL experiences of oppression are significant, given their destructive effects on people's lives; all forms are not equally salient or prominent under all conditions. African-American feminist Deborah K. King addresses this point in her essay "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology." Consider, for a moment, the following insights from that essay:

<extract>Unfortunately, most applications of the concepts of double and triple jeopardy have been overly simplistic in assuming that the relationships among &...various discriminations are merely additive. These relationships are interpreted as equivalent to the mathematical equation, racism plus sexism plus classism equals triple jeopardy. In this instance, each discrimination has a single, direct, and independent effect on status, wherein the relative contribution of each is readily apparent. This simple incremental process does not represent the nature of black women's oppression but, rather, I would contend, leads to nonproductive assertions that one factor can and should supplant the other... Such assertions ignore the fact that racism, sexism, and classism constitute three, interdependent control systems.[7] </extract>

Even as King acknowledges the interdependent interaction, of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination within specific social spaces, she acknowledges that each form is not equally salient.

<extract> The importance of any one factor in explaining black women's circumstances thus varies depending on the particular aspect of our lives under consideration and the reference groups to whom we are compared... In the interactive model, the relative significance of race, sex, or class in determining the conditions of black women's lives is neither fixed nor absolute but, rather, is dependent on the socio-historical context and social phenomenon under consideration. These interactions also produce what to some appears a seemingly confounding set of social roles and political attitudes among black women.[8] </extract>

One of the things that Marxists can learn from feminists emerging from social movements treated as "outside" the boundaries of working-class movements[9] is that when we underestimate the revolutionary potential of certain groups (that is, the potential of their experiences of oppression to move them toward radical action); we hinder our abilities to appreciate their ways/means of resisting. We thus can lose opportunities to join with them in expanding the ranks, reach, and theoretical unity of revolutionary struggle. Too many of us have for years operated against our best intentions of "uniting all who can be united" because our organizational and personal understanding of revolutionary tasks have generally dismissed gender, or sexuality, or patriarchy as "significant" theoretically. In our evolving-yet-still-narrow efforts to build broad social and political movements, we have embraced notions of revolutionary theory and practice that have taken these "other" forms of oppressive experience to be "secondary" to class.

In turn, by viewing the lived experiences of many as being of "secondary" importance, we have looked askance at their potential contributions to actions that could lead to social reforms even as we continue to struggle for complete social transformation. We have all too often overlooked the fact that in the United States, class is lived in many diverse ways within a populous and complex working class. Can we safely conclude that with such muddled thinking we can cogently argue that the faltering of revolutionary experiments has had absolutely nothing to do with failures to theoretically and politically grasp different experiences of oppression? Are we really willing to assume that we can conclude, despite the failure of many of us to really engage in a careful examination of failed and faltering experiments, that what feminists have discovered about them, or that what we don't know about them, is irrelevant?!

The Similar Effects of Oppressions

Here we can underscore the significance of our second point for consideration: the relative similarity between the effects of oppression and abuse on our lives and those of other human beings. Quite often within organizations purporting to make revolution we find some comrades who become uncomfortable or uneasy when questions and criticisms of sexism and homophobia arise. Comrades who raise these taboo subjects are made the targets of dismissive and derisive remarks about how they have confused "personal" with "political" matters. The assumption is then made that since the focus of a "radical political" organization is issues of politics and not personal concerns (personal "stuff" being important, perhaps, to individual people but not really pertinent when measured against the really weighty matters of politics); the discussion should table the "personal," to address the "political." This kind of dismissive dynamic has had a very corrosive force in the historical and contemporary development of social movement struggles in this country.

A particularly troublesome matter in all of this is the very distinction that so many well-intentioned comrades make between personal and political. First of all, this familiar rationalization ignores the momentous struggles of women in the United States during the late 1960s and 1970s to reveal connections between their personal experiences of oppression and the political character of gender and sex as principles for organizing social life. The unequal relations of power that have been socially constructed have generally privileged males at the expense of women, while also privileging heterosexuals at the expense of human beings who are lesbian, gay, and/or transgendered.

Yet the distinction between personal and political has also helped to obscure the basic similarities between ways in which large groups of human beings as well as individual persons are categorized, robbed of dignity in society, and dominated for the ends of others. This is a simple, but profound, point that can be lost amidst the intoxications and seductions of various

forms of privilege that characterize the social interactions of movement organizations and society in general. Too often many of us assume that because we have come together in order to make radical social change, we have shed all our "isms" at the door, like so many dirty clothes. But there is no great divide isolating any of us from the oppressions that characterize this social order. And once we recognize the similar ways in which human beings are disempowered and devastated by others--whether through systemic oppression of a social group, or the repeated physical, emotional, and mental devastation of individuals subjected to forms of abuse--we will be less inclined to be duped by simplistic assertions about the need to "just get over" personal stuff and maintain our focus on political matters.[10] If we are on a mission to generate and nurture revolution and liberation, we conscientiously try to avoid actions, arguments, and assumptions that reinforce and recreate domination, pain, and alienation within the ranks of the very movements in which we purport to engender new forms of community and citizenship.

The problem of patriarchy is at last being brought home to us. The women who have labored to bring this crucial matter into view in revolutionary organizations deserve our gratitude (as well as our attention) for their unflagging zeal and unflinching courage in repeatedly pushing us, individually and collectively, amidst enormous resistance, to seriously address this matter. That we have reached a juncture at which males in this organization have now become willing to take up this question of patriarchy should not be taken as any evidence that those males are now "the good guys." Even as White comrades must continuously strive to remain vigilant in their pursuit of an inclusive and humane anti-racist politics; men who aspire to be more than petty patriarchs must continuously work to develop understanding and practice that enable us to see how patriarchy positions us for privilege even as it provides for our oppression. Allan G. Johnson offers some very instructive insights in his book, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*:

<extract>In short, we ignore and take for granted what we can least afford to overlook in trying to understand and change the world. Rather than ask how social systems produce social problems such as male violence against women, we obsess over legal debate and titillating but irrelevant case histories... If the goal is to change the world, this won't help us. We need to see and deal with the social roots that generate and nurture the social problems that are reflected in the behavior of individuals. We can't do this without realizing that we all participate in something larger than ourselves, something we didn't create but that we have the power to affect through the choices we make about how to participate.

That something is patriarchy, which is more than a collection of individuals (such as "men"). It is a system, which means it can't be reduced to the people who participate in it...We are not patriarchy, no more than people who believe in Allah are Islam or Canadians are Canada. Patriarchy is a kind of society organized around certain kinds of social relationships and ideas. As individuals, we participate in it. Paradoxically, our participation both shapes our lives and gives us the opportunity to be part of changing or perpetuating it. But we are not it, which means that patriarchy can exist without men having "oppressive personalities" or actively conspiring with one another to defend male privilege. To demonstrate that gender oppression exists, we don't have to show that men are villains, that women are good-hearted victims, that women don't participate in their oppression, or that men never oppose it. When oppression is woven into the fabric of everyday life, we don't need to go out of our way to be overtly oppressive in order for an oppressive system to produce oppressive consequences. As the saying goes, what evil requires is simply that ordinary people do nothing.[11] </extract>

The foregoing means that it is not enough for us to focus on changing behaviors that privilege men and disadvantage women. Such changes can be helpful, but if men in this organization regularly organize childcare, and cook for gatherings such as this one, those welcome activities will not guarantee that the political development of anti-patriarchal women (and men) will become permanent priorities of our work! For our organization to nurture the political development of women as well as men, all of us--and not just the women--must work to create an environment, an organizational and movement culture, in which each of us considers the possible ways in which we may be contributing to the reproduction of patriarchy in all aspects of our work.

How Males Treat Other Males

If we are to really confront patriarchy, we must also consider how it ensnares men in our relations with one another. A very clear example can be drawn from the varied ways in which we tend to emphasize certain characteristics as "natural" and "normal" features of masculinity. What is more, we need to become better at distinguishing how patriarchal positioning of males changes under specific historical conditions.

Let's take a minute to consider how this focus on patriarchy might influence our work against empire. How many of us have stopped to reflect on the many ways in which the attacks of 9/11 have contributed to an intensification of aggressive expressions of what we might call "John Wayne" masculinity? How many of us have noticed, and questioned, the ways in which notions of the aggressive, hyper-sexed masculine male are being played out as the build-up for imperialist war has moved into full gear?! And how many of us have considered the possible value of having conversations with friends and loved ones about the connections between the strivings of young males to be "more manly" and their falling prey to the drums of the recruiters for war?

Admittedly, having such difficult discussions will not be enough to stop the maiming and killing of imperialist aggression. Yet if we were to listen to the counsel of feminists who have been articulating a vision of masculinity and citizenship that does not require human beings to become fodder and beasts in the service of US imperialism, what might we learn about new ways to intervene politically in the lives of those we love? We can also see terrible consequences of aggressive sexist and heterosexist masculinity in the continuing violent attacks experienced by women and men of varying sexual orientations. A precipitous increase perceived in violent attacks has most recently been noted within communities of color as well. As revolutionaries, we have some responsibility to find ways to concretely address this climate. A number of comrades may well scoff at such a thought. Yet let us be careful about the smugness with which we dismiss interventions that we have neither considered nor tried. Being Marxists does not mean that we have to arrogantly assume that we know all that we need to know. The state of social reality should clearly dispel such foolish thinking.

Organizing All the Oppressed

The last point I want to make is very simple indeed. Many of us have been trying for years to advance agendas of work that could move larger and larger numbers of people into radical social movement. Yet all too often, no matter how deliberately, thoughtfully, and artfully crafted, those well-intended action agendas have been based on narrow social bases, on the experiences and needs of woefully small sectors of the working class and the US body politic. Our agendas have reflected the conditions and visions of some, yet they have been silent and exclusionary on the conditions, experiences, needs and capacities for resistance of too many more! We can do better than we have done, and our revolutionary ranks can be increased! But we must be willing

to become more inclusive and more conscientious in our efforts to connect with many who are different from us. And this requires change of us.

If we really want to transform this society, we must find ways to win and join with as many oppressed human beings as possible in this vast country, especially those of the working class, to struggle against all forms of oppression. We may think that if we carefully craft new principles and bases for unity--grounded in our current thinking and practice--we can make it clear to those who want to join us that they are "welcome." "But just don't raise this set of questions, and just don't try to bring that aspect of your life into this organization, 'cause we are revolutionaries and we don't deal with that kind of apolitical, personal, emotional, bourgeois stuff!"

Or we can try something different. We can try to examine our existing ways of thinking and doing things. We can be honest about the reasons some comrades have left, and we can work to not create conditions that will reproduce similar exits. We can return to those honest comrades (have all of those who left been "opportunists?") and try to see if they can help us understand where we may have faltered in our theory, our organization, and/or our political initiatives. We can try to learn things that we may not have even considered worth knowing. We have the road before us. But, as two very effective architects of social change and mass education, Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, might say: "We must make the road by walking!"

Conclusion

Walking an unfamiliar road can be dangerous, especially when that path is one that twists and turns amidst dense forests, hidden ditches, rocks, and holes criss-crossing with busy freeways. We need to consider possible dangers as we try to make sense of the challenges we must undertake in light of our current conversations. One such danger will be that some of us will assume that all this talk of inclusion and "diversity" is quite nice to some extent, yet it really is not very instructive for some of our most important work, such as developing the programmatic political unity in moving toward establishment of a revolutionary party. This is an understandable sentiment and reaction, given the unenlightened way in which many of us have tried so hard to turn partial analyses into revolutionary agendas for so many years. This is not intended as a snide criticism! A number of very committed and thoughtful comrades have unwittingly operated without sufficient insight into our patriarchal legacy, and some of our work has suffered from a lack of inclusive vision.

What is required now is that we begin to see more clearly that if we have had a limited understanding and a contradictory practice within our organization, we really need to tread thoughtfully as we are moving forward to join with representatives of other organizations. If we don't try to apply new insights and new theoretical questions (at least "new" to a number of us) to our practice, how can we ensure that the work is not going to exclude and marginalize as we have done previously? The ugly and quite predictable reality is that we can't.

If, for example, we are interacting with other revolutionaries from a different organization with different views regarding patriarchy, how will we conduct discussions about our collective experiences in addressing this matter practically? Will we look askance at their efforts to address sexism, heterosexism, and patriarchy in their daily work? Will we be honestly self-critical about the extent to which our theoretical and organizational culture has proven problematic with respect to the links between class and race and gender and sexuality? Or will we quietly caucus amongst ourselves about the need to keep discussions of patriarchal practice and blindness on the down-low so as not to disrupt the really significant discussions of programmatic unity? Do we still not see that there are very definite connections between what

we think, how we act (both inside our organization and outside) and what we decide to do to move forward?

We have much to learn about how revolutionary work has been impeded in the past and present. To say this does not mean that we stop all work so we can have sensitivity sessions and gaze at our navels. It means that in all aspects of our work, we must try to see what has been invisible to us in the past. We need to consider at every turn the ways in which our thinking and action may be influenced by the positions of relative privilege from which we normally benefit. We need to search out connections and contradictions and address them before they become elephants in the room that we must then pretend we do not see, simply because we don't have time to stop for "that kind of discussion right now." We can and must move forward, as individual agents of change, as an organization, and as one of a number of organizations earnestly seeking align to seriously advance socially transformative struggles. Yet how do we walk a new road to freedom if we assume that we already know the way?

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Notes

[1] For many who would be Marxists, the very notion of simultaneity or intersectionality seems untenable, since it challenges the reductionist and monist tendencies to view only a single principle, or form, of oppression as primary--in most cases, for traditional Marxists, class. Historically and contemporarily, this way of thinking about oppression has often made the work of feminists seem a distraction from a "revolutionary" understanding of class. Numerous activists and scholars have tried, in recent years, to underscore the foundational roles played in the construction of US oppression by principles of social organization other than class. Omi and Winant, for example, have sought to develop an adequate theory of race. Many feminists, most notably socialist feminists of color, have tried repeatedly to develop an adequate theory of how gender and sexuality operate interdependently with race and class. One of the concrete suggestions to be gleaned from our current conversations should be the need for more systematic study of radical analyses previously ignored.

[2] The importance of this second point is that we must not only acknowledge that there are multiple principles and forms of oppression that exist in society and social spaces, but that the ways in which different people and groups experience oppressions reflects the diverse ways in which these oppressions influence one another and become salient in different ways within different contexts.

[3] This extremely important point has been repeatedly emphasized in contemporary times by scholars such as Robert Blauner (1972) and Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994).

[4] In truth, there is a wealth of feminist analysis and intervention from the Third World, or the global South, from which revolutionaries in this country might learn. For one brilliant example, consider the work of the Zapatistas in Mexico. This model of revolutionary change is certainly not without its problems, limitations, and missteps. Yet consider the profound transformations being generated with respect to gender amongst men and women by the Zapatista model!

[5] We are now confronting what a number of movement veterans have rightly defined as weaknesses or limitations of social movement culture(s) within the United States. We can thank scholars and activists such as Charles Payne, Barbara Ransby, Barbara Smith, and Curtis Muhammad (to name only a few) for such insights.

[6] The work of a number of socialist feminists, such as Lise Vogel and Zillah Eisenstein, and Nancy Hartsock can prove very instructive on this matter.

[7] A most useful resource is the volume entitled *Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives*, edited by Malson, Mudimbe-Boyi, O' Barr, and Wyer (1990). See p.270.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

[9] All too often we are confounded by the notion that "working-class movements occur over here," while "racial movements and/or feminist movements occur over there." We forget that in a number of instances, people in social movements have multiple characteristics and ways of identifying! There is, as Robin Kelley has suggested, no necessary distinction between waging class struggle and being feminist, or being a representative of a racial-ethnic group that is not white. We need to consider the extent to which a number of us still view "working-class reality" through the lens of whiteness!

[10] Feminist scholar and activist Aurora Levins Morales has made this point quite eloquently and effectively in her relatively recent book, *Medicine Stories: History, Culture, and the Politics of Integrity*.

[11] *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, Allan G. Johnson, 1997, Temple University Press, pp.77-78.

Confronting Classism

From Handbook for Nonviolent Action, published by the War Resisters League

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, but the greatest percentage of that wealth is in the hands of a tiny percentage of the population. It is environmentally and technically possible for everyone to enjoy a good standard of living if wealth were redistributed, exploitation ceased and the arms race abandoned. The inequitable distribution of wealth prevents the whole society from enjoying the full benefits of people's labor, intelligence and creativity and causes great misery for working class and poor people.

Classism is the systematic oppression of poor people and people who work for wages by those who have access to control of the necessary resources by which other people make their living. Classism is also held in place by a system of beliefs which ranks people according to economic status, "breeding," job and level of education. Classism says that upper class people are smarter and more articulate than working class and poor people. It is a way of keeping people down, it means upper-middle class and wealthy people define for everyone else what "normal" or "acceptable" is. Many of us have come to accept this standard as the norm and many of us have bought the myth that most of the country is middle class.

Criteria for determining class identity is subject to debate, being variously defined by origins, workforce status, income and/or outlook. For example, some consider all who derive their income from wages members of the working class; others exclude that percentage of the workforce which constitutes the professionals and managers whose incomes are high enough to provide a stake in the capitalist system. Depending on the breadth of one's definition, 70-85% of the population can be considered working class. This is true despite the fact that the individuals themselves might identify as or with the middle class. These individuals, however, are not beneficiaries of middle class privileges.

Class affects people not only on an economic level, but also on an emotional level. Classist attitudes have caused great pain by dividing people from one another and keeping individuals from personal fulfillment or the means to survive. Consequently, the process of rejecting such attitudes and their accompanying misinformation is an emotional one. Since people tend to hurt each other because they themselves have been hurt, and since most forms of oppression are accompanied by economic discrimination, class overlaps with many other social issues, all of which move as we unravel how we've been hurt.

The stereotype is that poor and working class people are unintelligent, inarticulate and "overly emotional." A good ally (a non-working-class committed supporter) will contradict these messages by soliciting the knowledge and histories of poor working class people, being a thoughtful listener, trying to understand what is being said, and not criticizing how the message is being presented or responding with automatic defensiveness. Distrust despair and anger are common consequences of oppression; it is the test of a true ally to remain undeterred when these flare up and to refrain from withdrawing support at such points. When targets of oppression believe the lies about ourselves, we are "internalizing our oppression." To begin to undo the damage caused by classism, it is useful for everyone to examine our own feelings about money, education, privilege, power, relationships, culture and ethnicity. This advice applies to organizations as well.

For general discussion:

As a movement, who are we and who are we trying to reach in terms of class? How? To whom do our literature and events appeal? How are poor people's needs being met in our organizing? What steps are being taken to change people's attitudes about classism? Are poor and Third World people invited to participate in organization planning? What is being done to reach and involve organized and unorganized workers? What are we doing to support poor, working-class and people of color in their struggles?

The situation for poor and working-class people in our movement and organization:

Is classism evident in who does what work in the organization? Are poor and working-class people facilitators, spokespeople and/or media contacts and leaders, and not just relegated to cleanup crews and collating mailings? Are organizing expenses paid upfront, or promptly reimbursed?

Meetings and events:

Make meetings and events known and accessible to poor and working-class people. Be aware of how the length, time and frequency of meetings affects full-time workers, especially those who parent. Arrange for transportation. Routinely provide childcare and sliding scales. Ask people what they need to be able to attend meetings and events. How does income-level and class composition affect the development of resources, the dates of demonstrations, the levels of commitment and power working people can have, the events sponsored? What are the cultural offerings? Who are the speakers and entertainers?

Process:

Make sure that process isn't actually being used to tell poor and working-class people how to behave by "proper" etiquette. Is consensus being used so that decisions favor those who can stay the longest, or who are used to getting their own way and will block to do so? Watch that group hugs and rituals are not imposed--allow people to interact with each other in whatever ways feel comfortable to them.

Civil disobedience (CD):

Does class determine who is able and who is unable to commit civil disobedience? How can we make it economically possible for those who want to commit CD to do so? How do we keep CD from being a movement privilege, with activists who can afford to tally arrest counts granted subsequently more political prestige? How do those who are arrested relate to the regular prison population (taking into account how class figures in their treatment)?

Be aware of how police are dealing with people of color, gay, lesbian, and known movement people during arrest situations. Be prepared to come to the aid of anyone who has been singled out by the police and may be receiving harsher treatment than others. Realize that during the booking process questions that are being asked to determine whether or not people can be released on their own recognizance, are particularly discriminatory. These questions concentrate on your economic, social, sexual and prior arrest standing. Realize that bail is the most blatant example of classism. Those who have money get out of jail--those who don't stay in.

—from articles by Donna Warnock and Laura Briggs

Also, check out:

Class Matters: <http://www.classmatters.org>

Author Betsy Leondar-Wright, wrote a book called *Class Matters: Cross-Class Alliance Building for Middle-Class Activists* (New Society Publishers, April, 2005). She interviewed 40 diverse activists, and snippets of some of those interviews can be found here.

Being An Ally For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People

These are some guidelines for people wanting to be allies for LGBT people. In today's world, LGBT issues are being discussed more than ever before. The discussions taking place in homes are often highly charged and emotional. This can be a scary topic and confusing to people on a very personal level. Being an ally is important, but it can be challenging. This list is by no means exhaustive, but provides a starting point. Add your own ideas and suggestions.

Don't assume heterosexuality. In our society, we generally assume that everyone we meet is heterosexual. Often people hide who they really are until they know they are safe to come 'out'. Use gender neutral language when referring to someone's partner if you don't know the person well. In general, be aware of the gender language you use and the implications this language might have. Educate yourself about LGBT issues. There are many resources available, reading lists and places to go for information. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Explore ways to creatively integrate LGBT issues in your work. Establishing dialogue and educating about LGBT issues in the context of your other work can be a valuable process for everyone regardless of sexual orientation. Integration of LGBT issues into work you are doing instead of separating it out as a separate topic is an important strategy to establishing a safe place for people to talk about many issues in their lives.

Challenge stereotypes that people may have about LGBT as well as other people in our society. Challenge derogatory remarks and jokes made about any group of people. Avoid making those remarks yourself. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices. Examine the effect sexual orientation has on people's lives and development. Identify how race, religion, class, ability and gender intersect with sexual orientation and how multiple identities shape our lives.

Avoid the use of heterosexist language, such as making remarks implying that all people of the same gender date or marry members of the other gender.

Respect how people choose to name themselves. Most people with a same sex or bisexual orientation prefer to be called gay, lesbian, or bisexual rather than homosexual. 'Queer' is increasingly used by some gay, lesbian or bisexual people (especially in the younger generations), but don't use it unless you are clear that it is okay with that person. If you don't know how to identify a particular group, it's okay to ask. Don't expect members of any population that is a target of bias (e.g. gays, Jews, people of color, women, people with disabilities) to always be the 'experts' on issues pertaining to their particular identity group. Avoid tokenizing or patronizing individuals from different groups.

Encourage and allow disagreement on topics of sexual identity and related civil rights. These issues are very highly charged and confusing. If there isn't some disagreement, it probably means people are tuned out or hiding their real feelings. Keep disagreement and discussion focused on principles and issues rather than personalities and keep disagreement respectful.

Remember that you are human. Allow yourself to not know everything, to make mistakes and to occasionally be insensitive. Avoid setting yourself up as an 'expert' unless you are one. Give yourself time to learn the issues and ask questions and to explore your own personal feelings. Ask for support if you are getting harassed or problems are surfacing related to your raising issues around sexual orientation. Don't isolate yourself in these kinds of situations and try to identify your supporters. You may be labeled as gay, lesbian or bisexual, whether you are or not.

Use this opportunity to deepen your understanding of the power of homophobia and heterosexism. Make sure you are safe.

Prepare yourself for a journey of change and growth that will come by exploring sexual identity issues, heterosexism and other issues of difference. This can be a painful, exciting and enlightening process and will help you to know yourself better. By learning and speaking out as an ally, you will be making the world a safer, more affirming place for all. Without knowing it, you may change or even save people's lives.

This article is reprinted from the School of the Americas Watch website: http://www.soaw.org/new/print_article.php?id=722

What is Heterosexism?

Assuming that everyone you meet is probably heterosexual.

Being outspoken about gay rights, but making sure everyone knows that you are straight.

Thinking that you can “spot one.”

Feeling that a lesbian is just a woman who couldn’t find a “real” man; or that a gay man just couldn’t find the “right woman.”

Stereotyping lesbians as “man-haters,” separatists, or radicals. Using those terms accusingly.

Feeling repulsed by public displays of affection between people of the same sex but accepting the same

type of affection as normal and charming between people of the opposite sex.

Looking at lesbians/gays/bisexuals and automatically thinking only of their sexuality, rather than seeing them as whole, complex people.

Failing to be supportive of a lesbian/gay/bisexual friend who just had a quarrel or breakup with their partner.

Changing your seat in a meeting because a lesbian/gay/bisexual person sat in the chair next to yours.

Not asking about a friend’s same-sex lover, despite your regularly asking how others’ opposite-sex partners are.

Kissing an old friend, but being afraid to even shake hands with a lesbian/gay/bisexual person.

Thinking that if (for women), a lesbian touches you she is making advances, (for men) if a gay man touches you, he is making advances.

Wondering which one is the “man”/”mother” in a lesbian relationship.

Avoiding mentioning to your friends that you are involved in a woman’s organization because you are afraid that they will think that you are a lesbian.

Not confronting heterosexist/homophobic comments for fear of being identified with lesbians or gays.

Heterosexual Privilege is the right to...

Marriage	partner/access to court systems for Order of Protection, sexual assault, medical attention
Kiss/show affection in public	Visitation of partner/spouse when hospitalized
Have in-laws	Be seen as a whole person, rather than defined/judged by your sexual orientation
Family support	Openly display artwork significant to your relationship
Be validated by your own religion	Not question your normality
Have children without any questions	Not explain your sexual orientation
Custody of children if partner dies	Not be nervous about "coming out" to friends/family
Show pain openly if partner dies	Not feel compelled to disprove the myths of your own heterosexuality
Be open a bout apartment hunting with a significant other	Not hide friends and social activities geared to the same sex
Be socially accepted by neighbors, neighborhood	Not resent media for heterosexual reference bias (or feel excluded)
Feel comfortable in children's school, with children's teachers, and school activities	Not have systems that feel fear there own sexuality
Dress without worrying about what it represents	Not fear that your sexuality may become a major point in a smear campaign that may affect the custody of your child, the job you want, the house you would like to buy, the way you are treated by neighbors, friends, family
Share holidays with lover and families	Living in rural America and having access to libraries, art, institutes, radio stations, movies, etc. with all heterosexual plots
Openly discuss politics without fear of someone reading between the lines	Public recognition and support for an intimate relationship (e.g. receiving gifts, cards, or phone calls celebrating your commitments to another person)
Have children be comfortable with bringing their friends home	Paid leave from employment when grieving the death of your spouse
Have access to sitcoms, songs, books with your affect ional preference the basic core of the plot	Having positive media images of people with whom you can identify
Health insurance through spouse/partner's employment/health plan	
Be legal guardian in the event of a disabling accident/illness (Sharon Kowalski)	
Purchase items with a partner and experience no-questions-asked attitude. Example: cars, houses, property.	
Be sexual with your partner and not break the law	
Legal advocacy: equal division of property when a relationship ends/visitation/court assistance/assistance with abusive	

Expressing pain when a relationship ends and having other people notice and tend to your pain

Dating the person of your desire in your teen years

Not being identified by your sexuality/culture (“You know, the gay one.”)

Adopted from Confronting Homophobia and PFLAG, Los Angeles Chapter (1992)

Being employed as a teacher in a preschool through high school without fear of being fired any day because you are assumed to corrupt children

Being able to openly serve in the military

ADDING SOME FUN TO FUNDRAISING!

Some Helpful Hints on Where to Start and Who to Talk to

It has become one of the necessary things in order to get to conferences, delegations, and helping our fellow brothers and sisters in our struggle to work in solidarity with them. This whole money thing gets in the way far too often and so hopefully this will give students some ideas on how to obtain money at a local level since it has been proven time and time again that the local unions have more money to give out to people who do our kind of work.

1. Basic Fundraising Tips:

Give people a number. When you're asking a person, group or organization to help fund an activity or whatever, you need to ask for specific amount. Leave room for them to give more if they really want to or less if they want to help but don't have pockets quite as deep as you'd hoped.

Overestimate. Don't make the sum of what you're asking for the exact amount that you need - that's a surefire way to come up short. It's usually a safe bet to assume you'll get one third to half of what you ask for.

Call back. If you email, fax, mail or call a person or group for money make sure to follow up with them. Call them to see if they have any questions, to make sure that your request for funding reached the right person, and that person got all the information they need. If you don't follow up you ensure that you won't get money. It is also harder to say "no" to someone in person.

Give them what they need. Don't make it hard for people to give you money. In any request you make for funds make sure you include information like who they should make checks out to, where they should send checks, how they can contact you, and what the money is for. Some people/organizations will need more information than others about how you're using the money. You should find out about the people/organizations' particular needs when you make follow-up calls.

Get help. Fundraising is a difficult task and hard for one person to do alone. Getting more people involved from the beginning only guarantees a better outcome in the end. Dividing the work up on your campus can help too. (IE one person to approach unions, one to do on campus fundraising and one to organize an event)

Self interest. It is critical to make sure person/organization you're requesting money from is aware of all the potential benefits to their organization from the event or activity you are trying to get funding for. People don't give you money because they think you're so nice, they give you money because they see how their interests are served.

2. Raising Money on Campus:

Student government. On many campuses student governments have a ton of money. Writing a bill for funding and bringing it before your student government is often a relatively easy way to get money. Pointing out to your student government all the ways in which the event or activity will help student organizations develop will make them all the more interested in helping fund the training. You will need to find a senator to support the bill and allow time for the bill to go through committees and full senate. Also if you are granted money, make sure you do all the right paperwork.

Sympathetic faculty/teachers. Yes, you can ask them for money. A simple letter explaining your organization and what you're doing printed on nice letterhead can work wonders. Stick one in every mailbox on campus and you might even get a few surprises. Ask the teachers you know to make sure they got your letter.

3. Approaching Labor Organizations:

Meet and greet. Developing a relationship with local unions is very important. Students have time and energy that many workers don't have, and unions have resources many students don't have. Combined with a similar mission this makes for a great partnership. So go meet the folks at all the Union halls in your town. Tell them what's going on at your campus, and there are events or activities coming up that you will be involved in that concern labor issues. After they know what's up most unions are more than happy to help fund a group of students getting trained to join the struggle for workers' rights.

Councils. Central Labor Councils can also be a place to look to for support. Most will be more than happy to help you find funding for you, and if they won't or can't for some reason give you money, getting a statement of support from the CLC can help you lobby other unions. Labor councils generally meet on a monthly basis though so you need to get in touch with them pretty far in advance. CLCs often have a pretty good idea what which locals will be supportive and have contact info for all of them. You can go to the AFL-CIO website at <http://www.aflcio.org/unionand/statefed.htm> to find links to your state's CLCs.

District and Regional. Contacting district and regional offices of unions can also be worth your while. Fax is usually the best way to put in a request for funds. Since you know exactly when they get it you can make your follow up call a couple of hours after sending the fax to make sure it got in the right hands and see if they need any more information. It is always best to start with a contact that you know first at the district and regional offices.

Don't wait until the last minute. When asking a Union for money sooner is always better than later. In some cases a local will have to vote before a substantial amount of money will be granted and that can take a few weeks, not to mention the time it takes to actually get a check cut.

Let 'em speak. Offer the Labor organizations an opportunity to get the word out about a struggle happening locally, or talk about something they are doing or just set up a table with their information.

4. Approaching Other Organizations:

Approaching other community groups that you consider allies might help fund you. After all, they too have a vested interest in the presence of well-trained, experienced organizers in your area. Offer to let them set up an informational table, or give a presentation during lunch one day in exchange for a donation.

5. Other Ways to Raise Money:

Events. Ask "progressive" acts, (ie bands, poets, performance artists) in your area, to do a freebie and let your group have the door money. It's usually not too hard to find a club, pub or bar that's willing to let you have a benefit night. Then just make sure everyone you know shows up and have a blast.

Pass the hat. Take up a collection for the group at your meetings (five or more people discussing your group is considered a meeting). It's a great way to give a little at a time and to actually have money for when you need it.

The list goes on. You can do anything from having your own walk-a-thon to a yard sale, just remember to BE CREATIVE AND HAVE FUN!!!!!!!!!!

Sample Fundraising Letter

Dear Progressive Teacher,

I'd like to take the time to tell you about a very unique movement that has swept across campuses in the United States, and literally around the world. You may already know about it.

The student movement against sweatshops, largely made up of a national network of thousands called United Students Against Sweatshops, has galvanized student organizing like no other issue since South African apartheid in the 1980s. And sweatshops go beyond the meaning of the word: USAS activists are organizing campus worker living wage campaigns, farmworker solidarity campaigns, and doing many other things to eliminate global inequality.

At this school, we've participated in a number of ways. [List the number of ways, and don't forget to put them in a positive light.] We're proud of what we've accomplished here and what USAS has as a whole, making real gains in workers' rights, in the apparel industry, and in our own schools.

This January, USAS will be holding its national organizing conference in Los Angeles, CA, the sweatshop capital of the United States. There we will be marching with L.A. garment workers to protest Forever 21, a company which the L.A. Garment Workers Center has been protesting for sweatshop abuses right here in the US.

This is a very important conference as many new and young USAS activists are coming together for the first time to share in fun, skills-building, and strategizing for the upcoming years. Now, more than ever, it is important that we, as students, get serious about organizing for social change. These are unprecedented times for the global economy and no one knows the next disaster that is around the corner!

We are raising money locally for our group to travel to this conference, as travel expenses are a little higher than usual for this particular event. We also think it is crucial that we attend: students have so much more power when we can support each other from campus to campus. We are asking you for a \$100 to \$200 donation towards our expenses. Your donation will go a long way towards supporting one the most important student movement in recent years.

I'll be calling you soon after you receive this letter to discuss your thoughts on student organizing and to ask for a contribution. Please consider donating to our group very seriously. Thank you very much.

In solidarity,