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Which Companies Have Been Naughty Vs. Nice?

Anti-sweatshop groups release 2008 “Sweatshop Hall of Shame,”

Urge consumers to “Shop with a Conscience” over the holidays

Just in time for the post-Thanksgiving, holiday shopping frenzy, labor rights and human rights organizations in the United States are releasing the 2007-2008 Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide. Created by SweatFree Communities, Sweatshop Watch, and the International Labor Rights Forum, the Shop with a Conscience Guide provides a list of “sweatfree” options for consumers who would like to purchase clothing made under ethical conditions.

“This year’s Guide features 24 ‘sweatfree’ companies, offering a diverse selection of apparel and confirming the growing consumer demand for clothing made under fair and humane conditions,” said Bjorn Claeson, Executive Director of SweatFree Communities.

The Guide profiles companies that produce clothing in accordance with international fair labor standards, such as ensuring workers healthy and safe working conditions; wages and benefits sufficient to support the basic needs of their families; and treatment with respect and dignity. In addition, the Guide promotes clothing produced in shops where workers are organized into democratic unions or worker-owned cooperatives and have an effective, collective voice in determining their wages and working conditions.

As a counterpoint to the sweat-free consumer guide, anti-sweatshop organizations are also releasing the 2008 Sweatshop Hall of Shame – apparel companies that are allegedly flouting labor laws and basic worker protections. This year’s official inductees are: American Eagle, Carrefour, Cintas, Dickies, Disney, Guess, Hanes, New Era, Speedo, Tommy Hilfiger, Toys “R” Us, and Wal-Mart.

“The 2008 inductees of the Sweatshop Hall of Shame are not necessarily the worst of the worst,” said Rini Chakraborty, Executive Director of Sweatshop Watch. “Rather, these companies have distinguished themselves by turning a blind eye towards well-documented, serious labor violations. In an industry where

sweatshops are the norm rather than the exception, these companies 'merely' exemplify the types of violations rampant within the global garment industry: paying workers poverty wages for long, hard hours of work under appalling conditions."

Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum, added: "The recent discovery of forced child labor in a GapKids sweatshop in New Delhi, India serves as a wake-up call for an entire industry that thrives on cutting costs without considering the consequences. Companies have a legal and ethical responsibility to use the same level of resources, creativity, and ingenuity for selling their products towards ending sweatshops. This tragedy is also a reminder to consumers that their spending choices have real consequences. This holiday season, we hope that consumers will be part of the solution to the sweatshop problem."

The 2007-08 Shop with a Conscience Guide features Autonomie Project, DeMoulin Apparel, Donnelly/Colt, EthixSupply, Fair Trade Sports, Fair Trade Uniforms, Jack Victor, Justice Clothing, Just Shirts, Kenneth Gordon, Leather Coats, Maggie's Organics, Metro Sportswear, Nicaraguan Garment Workers Fund, North County Fair Trade, No Sweat Apparel, Protexall, Rage Baby, Resistol, Schott N.Y.C., SterlingWear, Traditions Fair Trade, Union Maid Screen Printing, and The Working World.

The Shop with a Conscience Guide, as well as the Sweatshop Hall of Shame, can be found at: www.sweatfree.org/shopping ^[1].

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Links:

[1] <http://www.sweatfree.org/shopping>