



**SWEATSHOP WATCH™**

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## Sweatshop Hall of Shame

INDUCTEES FOR 2008

For the past three years, a group of labor rights and human rights organizations in the United States have published the **Shop with a Conscience** Consumer Guide – a list of “sweatfree” options for the growing number of consumers who would like to purchase clothing made under ethical conditions.

This year, as a counterpoint to the **Shop with a Conscience** Guide, SweatFree Communities, Sweatshop Watch, and International Labor Rights Forum have launched the **Sweatshop Hall of Shame** featuring apparel companies that have consistently flouted labor laws and basic worker protections. Most, if not all, of the companies listed in this year’s **Hall of Shame** pay workers poverty wages for long, hard hours of work under appalling conditions. Nearly all have used unjust if not illegal tactics to squash workers’ basic right to organize.

Over a decade after the initial revelations of modern-day garment industry sweatshops, the UK-based newspaper *The Observer* recently published a sweatshop exposé illustrating the need for continued public vigilance over the industry. According to *The Observer*, children who had been sold into bonded labor were producing Gap Kids clothing under conditions close to slavery in a sweatshop in New Delhi, India. Ranging in age from 8- to 15-years-old, the child workers toiled 16 hours a day, hand-sewing clothing for no pay at all. The sweatshop was smeared in filth and excrement, and the children were subject to threats and beatings.

We hope that this true horror story serves as another wake-up call for both consumers and the industry. Consumers must demand an end to a production system that sacrifices workers in the name of cheap consumer goods. Companies must finally address the root causes of sweatshops, child labor, and the gross inequalities across the apparel industry, fundamentally changing the purchasing practices that give rise to worker abuse in the first place. A decade of writing “codes of conduct” and conducting tens of thousands of audits in thousands of factories across the globe has not eradicated sweatshops. Indeed, in the apparel industry sweatshops are still the norm rather than the exception.

The working conditions we highlight in the **Hall of Shame** exemplify the types of violations that are rampant within the apparel industry, as well as other labor-intensive industries such as laundries and toys. Because Gap is now working actively with human rights groups in India to address the problem of child labor and sweatshops, we have not included Gap in the **Hall of Shame**. Instead, we have turned the spotlight on companies that have failed to take any meaningful steps towards addressing labor violations even after workers themselves have organized and demanded decent working conditions.

For 2008, the official inductees of the Sweatshop **Hall of Shame** are: **American Eagle, Carrefour, Cintas, Dickies, Disney, Guess, Hanes, New Era, Speedo, Tommy Hilfiger, Toys "R" Us,** and **Wal-Mart.**

### **American Eagle Outfitters: AKA "American Vulture"** *daily disrespect – no raises – no voice on the job*

American Eagle Outfitters says it cares about workers; its Code of Conduct requires contractors to respect the right of employees to form a union. Yet, according to workers in Canada, workers at the warehouse contracted to ship AEO clothing across Canada faced harassment and intimidation when they tried to improve conditions by forming a union.

A majority of workers at National Logistics Services (NLS) applied to join a union in April 2007. American Eagle is NLS' largest client and up until early 2006, owned and operated the NLS distribution center. Workers wanted a union because they faced **daily disrespect** from management; could **not move into permanent employment positions; didn't get pay raises** in three years; and had no voice on the job.

So far, American Eagle hasn't lifted a finger to enforce its Code of Conduct. Only after students at dozens of schools joined the boycott and American Eagle started feeling the heat from investors did the company agree to meet with UNITE HERE. Negotiations are ongoing, but pressure is still needed in order to achieve a settlement and ensure workers' rights are protected.

#### **Act NOW!**

Visit [www.AmericanVulture.org](http://www.AmericanVulture.org) to learn more about the campaign and get involved.

### **Cintas' Dirty Laundry** *death in 300 degree dryer*

According to the Uniform Justice campaign, Cintas is the most profitable uniform and laundry company in North America – posting profits of \$330 million in 2007 alone. For Cintas workers, however, it's a whole other story.

Few people know about the **poverty wages, backbreaking work,** and **hazardous conditions** that Cintas employees endure in laundries across the United States. Since 2003, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found nearly 250 violations of health and safety standards at Cintas. OSHA assessed more than \$3.1 million in initial penalties since August for deadly conditions at six separate facilities, including one that led to a worker's death in a 300 degree dryer. Just weeks before this tragedy, a worker in another facility's arm was shattered.

#### **Act NOW!**

Currently workers and their allies are taking action on behalf of a fired health and safety activist at: [http://action.unitehere.org/campaign/making\\_cintas\\_safe\\_now](http://action.unitehere.org/campaign/making_cintas_safe_now). Go to [www.UniformJustice.org](http://www.UniformJustice.org) or [www.CintasExposed.org](http://www.CintasExposed.org) for news, updates, and action alerts.

### **Dickies, Guess, and Tommy Hilfiger: No Justice, No Jeans** *illegal firings – harassment of union supporters*

At the Vaqueros Navarra jean factory in Tehuacan, Mexico, over 100 workers have been **illegally fired** and many more have been **harassed and pressured** to resign for supporting an independent union, according to the Maquila Solidarity Network and an independent investigation carried out by Verité.

Vaqueros Navarra is owned by the Navarra Group, which owns several garment and laundry facilities in the Tehuacan area and is one of the largest employers in the region. Some

brands that buy from the Navarra Group, including American Eagle Outfitters, Gap and Warnaco, have responded to the workers' call for action. But three brands with the most production in those factories – Dickies, Guess, and Tommy Hilfiger – have failed to act. It's time for them to step up to the plate and stop the illegal firings of Mexican jean workers.

### **Act NOW!**

Send a letter to the three, hold-out brands today urging them to reinstate all unjustly dismissed workers and to ensure a free and fair union representation vote. Visit [www.LabourStart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=294](http://www.LabourStart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=294) for a sample letter.

### **Disney: Should Workers Wish Upon A Star for Basic Rights? *exposure to deadly toxins – poverty wages – 15 hour shifts***

This year marks Disney's "Year of a Million Dreams" celebration. But for workers in China who make children's books and toys for the entertainment giant, it's been a year of a zillion labor law violations.

In detailed reports, Hong Kong-based NGO Students and Scholars against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM) has documented widespread violations of China's labor laws as well as Disney's Code of Conduct at Disney's supplier factories in China. According to SACOM, the roughly 800 workers who produce Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, and Winnie the Pooh plastic toys for Disney at the Haowei Toys factory in Shenzhen have been: **forced to work up to 15-hour shifts; paid poverty wages**, far below the legal minimum wage; and **exposed to deadly toxins**.

So far, Disney has refused to address these serious allegations of worker abuse and exploitation.

### **Act NOW!**

For more information about Disney and to sign an on-line petition, please visit [www.PetitionOnline.com/wlchan/petition.html](http://www.PetitionOnline.com/wlchan/petition.html).

### **Hanes and Wal-Mart: Look Who They've Got Sweating Profits for Hanes Now**

***verbal abuse – forced, unpaid overtime – no rights***

Kevin Bacon, Jennifer Love Hewitt, and Michael Jordan are just some of the celebrities who love to sport Hanes' ComfortSoft products on TV. But how comfortable do you think these celebrity endorsers would be if they knew about serious and persistent worker rights violations at one of Hanes' factories?

TOS Dominicana, a textile plant in the Dominican Republic owned and operated by Hanesbrands Inc., employs about 1,100 workers who manufacture fabrics primarily for t-shirts. Wal-Mart is the largest client of TOS Dominicana. A report released by the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) provides alarming evidence of violations of both domestic law and university codes of conduct at TOS Dominicana. These violations include: **forced and unpaid overtime; verbal harassment and abuse** of workers; **unlawful coercion** of workers to sign new employment contracts and relinquish their rights; and the use of **illegal tactics to thwart workers' freedom** to exercise their associational rights. Although Hanesbrands has been notified of these findings, Hanesbrands refuses to even acknowledge that these violations occurred.

### **Act NOW!**

For more information about TOS Dominicana and to deliver a letter to the Wal-Mart nearest you, go to [www.laborrights.org/projects/corporate/walmart/tosletterdelivery1107.doc](http://www.laborrights.org/projects/corporate/walmart/tosletterdelivery1107.doc).

### **New Era Cap: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Working Conditions** *racial discrimination – illegal firings – poverty wages*

In response to **low wages, unsafe working conditions,** and **racial discrimination,** workers at the New Era plant in Mobile, Alabama attempted to organize a union, according to United Students Against Sweatshops. New Era Cap operates two garment shops plus a distribution center in Alabama. Management responded with an intense anti-union campaign that culminated in the firing of more than 20 workers. As if this weren't enough, New Era announced that they plan to permanently lay off 20 more workers right before the holiday season.

#### **Act NOW!**

Tell New Era Cap to stop laying off workers! Take action by visiting: [www.unionvoice.org/campaign/newera/77ekswrlmbb6dd](http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/newera/77ekswrlmbb6dd).

### **Speedo, Toys "R" Us, and Carrefour: What's underneath your swimwear?** *dangerous working conditions – exhaustion – 100 hour work week*

Speedo may be the top-selling and best-known swimwear brand in the world, and an official sponsor of the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games in China. But workers in China producing Speedo sporting goods are drowning in abuse. Toys 'R' Us and Carrefour are also implicated in this sweatshop scandal.

According to the National Labor Committee, Guangzhou Vanguard Water Sport Products Company Ltd in Guangzhou, China produces swim gear and sporting goods for its major clients Speedo, Toys 'R' Us, and the giant French retailer Carrefour. Workers' routine shift is **14 ½ hours a day**, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., **seven days a week**. Workers report going for months at a time **without a single day off**. One worker, forced to toil a 23-hour shift at a compression molding machine, shed tears as he described how exhausted he was, and terrified that his hands would be crushed by the relentless motion of the machine if he slowed down for even a second. Production line workers are allowed just one-and-a-half minutes to assemble each Speedo "Condor" swim mask for which they are paid less than two cents. On average, the workers are earning **just 49 cents an hour**—including all the grueling overtime hours—while the legal minimum wage is 60 cents an hour.

#### **Act Now!**

For more information and specific contact information for each brand, visit [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org).