REPORT

SweatFreeCommunities
International Conference 2006

April 7-9, 2006, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Hosted by the Resource Center of the Americas

We reach out our hand out to you; you reach your hand out to us. Holding hands we can tell the politicians, “We are in this together and this is what we want.”

– Yannick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye, Haiti
This Report from the SweatFree Communities International Conference 2006 is based on notes from 14 conference sessions, edited and organized by Bjorn Claeson and Liana Foxvog of SweatFree Communities. We are grateful to the meticulous note takers who at times appeared to be human recording devices: Sarah Church, Eric Dirnbach, Dick Meyer, Valerie Orth, Natalia Rudiak, Matthew Schumwinger, Katherine Stecher, and Trina Tocco. We are also grateful to Jeremy Blasi, Marieke Eyskoot, Dave Lewit, Celeste Taylor, Alex T. Tom, and Larry Weiss for submitting their own written presentations which we have reproduced here. Although the conference notes were of exceptional quality and we sometimes compared two sets of notes in order to represent the presentations and discussions as accurately as possible, the Report is by no means comprehensive and may lack information significant to the presenters. If you are interested in learning more about a particular workshop or presentation we can connect you with the presenters. Appendix 1 contains a complete conference program.
## Contents

### The Strategy of Sweatfree Organizing

- Introduction ........................................................................................................ 4
- The Strategy of SweatFree Organizing ............................................................ 6
- Buy Local and Sweatfree .................................................................................. 17
- How to Build a Campaign and Make Your City/County/State Sweatfree ... 20
- Good Government for Worker Justice ............................................................. 21
- Organizing in the Age of CAFTA and the WTO ........................................... 25
- After Victory... Sweatfree Legislation: A Tool to be Used ......................... 26
- Models for Verification and Enforcement of Sweatfree Policies ................. 31
- A Day in the Life of an Independent Monitor .............................................. 35
- Next Steps in City and State Collaboration on Enforcement and Procurement ........................................................................................................ 37

### Connecting Consumers to Empowered Workplaces

- What is Sweatfree? ............................................................................................ 42
- Marketing: the Fine Line between Activism and Entrepreneurialism ........ 48

### Worker Organizing and International Solidarity

- Worker Organizing Models and the Role of Solidarity ............................... 50

- Synthesizing the Weekend and Looking Ahead ........................................... 62
- Appendix 1: Conference Program ................................................................. 66
- Appendix 2: Conference Sponsors ................................................................. 74
Introduction

The SweatFree Communities International Conference 2006 gathered about 150 participants from a variety of backgrounds, movements, and organizations. Sweatfree campaigns, fair trade organizations, sweatfree producers and distributors, unions, and worker advocacy organizations from the United States, Canada, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and China came together for education, networking, and strategizing. As one participant observed:

“We see the strong connections between the rural American textile worker struggling to hold onto a job with dignity and the worker who gets paid just pennies an hour struggling to survive. The belief in the inherent worth and dignity of human life is what brings us together.”

We hope the conference strengthened this sense of unity, and that many participants left feeling “that the anti-sweatshop movement is stronger than it’s been in a long time,” as another participant said afterwards.

While the conference was organized into tracks about organizing and education, youth campaigning, and strategizing, this report – far from comprehensive – is organized thematically into three major conference discussion topics. The Strategy of Sweatfree Organizing includes valuable step-by-step organizing tips for winning a strong sweatfree procurement policy as well as discussions of open government and participatory budgeting initiatives that would further the sweatfree movement by creating a more transparent, inclusive, and participatory local government. These local democracy campaigns are especially relevant and powerful in the context of new global trade rules that include restrictive directions for government procurement, limiting the use of such procurement to promote fair labor practices and transforming sweatfree activists into perhaps unwitting participants in a civil disobedience movement.

Participants offered their reflections on the roles of worker organizers, sweatfree activists, city staff, and independent monitoring organizations in using both sweatfree and buy-local policies as tools to hold corporations accountable for their labor practices and strengthen sweatshop workers’ struggles for better conditions both in the United States and elsewhere. One particularly exciting new initiative would coordinate the enforcement of sweatfree procurement policies across jurisdictional boundaries, creating a partnership of cities, states, counties, school districts, and civil society to end sweatshop abuses.

Connecting Consumers to Empowered Workplaces raises a critical question for the emerging partnership between public jurisdictions and the sweatfree movement. The question is not about defining “sweatfree” workplaces, for that is, as one presenter observed, simply a strategic question that we should ask in order to support workers’ own struggles for a voice on the job and better working conditions. The real question is how to organize the vast consumer power of cities and states to encourage workers to stand up for their rights and to safeguard workers’ victories – their voice and power in the workplace. In this respect, the
Designated Supplier Program, proposed by United Students Against Sweatshops to consolidate the procurement power of university licensees in a small number of empowered workplaces, offers an intriguing model for cities and states that are interested in cooperative contracting. Similarly, a fair trade label for garments—a possibility currently being investigated by TransFair USA—would make it possible for cities and states to purchase fair-trade certified uniforms much like they can now purchase fair-trade certified coffee. In the final analysis, we should treat these initiatives as marketing challenges as some presenters suggested, arguing that marketing, more than just amoral product promotion, involves research and education on the power of ethical consumption in partnership with empowered workers. In short, marketing is activism.

*Worker Organizing and the Role of International Solidarity* presents a number of challenges to the anti-sweatshop movement. In the first place, how useful are codes of conduct and professional monitors in environments where few laws are respected and enforced anyway? Workers, several presenters suggested, are the only legitimate monitors of workplace practices; yet, union organizing is not always possible. So is there a role for international solidarity in connecting with and supporting worker-monitors when they are not organized as unions? And how does the anti-sweatshop movement better support other forms of worker organizing, such as worker centers that relate to workers as social, cultural, and physical beings and seek to meet workers’ needs on a variety of levels within and beyond the workplace?

Looking beyond union organizing is particularly relevant for solidarity campaigns when our public institutions depend on a variety of union and non-union workers in the United States and around the world. Major League Baseball is a salient example: there are U.S. union workers at companies that hold licenses to produce Major League Baseball apparel and non-union workers of the same companies and other companies who also produce baseball apparel; there are stadium workers, some of whom are unionized and others who are not; and there are the baseball players themselves and their association. The public has a stake in their teams both as fans and as tax payers. These are the conditions for a conference discussion that asked: can unions, non-unionized workers, and sweatfree activists work together to improve the conditions of all workers associated with Major League Baseball?

There were many other fascinating conference presentations and discussions that we are unable to include in this report (please check Appendix 1 for the full conference program). Nevertheless, we hope it provides a sense of the breadth of connections and in-depth discussions that will nurture our work in the coming year and beyond.
The Strategy of SweatFree Organizing

What is sweatfree organizing, who is involved, how do they work together, and makes it an effective strategy to end sweatshop exploitation? Hear from key participants how they see their role in the movement, and how we can sharpen the strategy to increase our power to make change.

- Bjorn Claeson, SweatFree Communities
- Wade Crowfoot, San Francisco Mayor’s Liaison to the Board
- Marieke Eyskoot, Clean Clothes Campaign International Secretariat
- Gilberto García, Centro de Estudios y Apoyo Laboral (Labor Studies and Support Center, El Salvador)
- Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops
- Lori Ryan, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace
- Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium

Moderator: Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities

Notes: Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE

Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops

Rutter discussed the student role in the sweatshop struggle. What is a sweatshop? Exploitation, long working hours, no union, child labor, harassment, environmental problems, health and safety problems, sexual harassment, no bathroom breaks, pregnancy tests, hot factory conditions, etc..

If workers try to change things by organizing, they are often fired, beaten, blacklisted, deported, killed, or intimidated.

In the late 1990’s, students wanted to find ways to support garment worker struggles. Universities had large contracts with the biggest sportswear brands, such as Nike, Adidas, Russell, and Jansport. Students began to explore how they could use their power as students to affect the major brands and force them to meet workers’ demands.

One early example is the Kukdong factory in Mexico. Workers were tired of the rotten food served in the factory. When several workers complained, they were fired. Workers went on a wildcat strike until the workers were rehired. Management had the workers beaten. Students supported the campaign on campus, in partnership with workers. After 9 months, there was victory, and the workers formed an independent union. In negotiations, they achieved a 100% wage increase and health and safety improvements.

Students developed codes of conduct for their universities about where the licensed apparel can be made. We demanded factory location disclosure. At first the brands said it couldn’t be done, but now we have factory disclosure and the information is in an online database at www.workersrights.org. We knew
that enforcement needed to be effective. We created a monitoring organization, the Workers Rights Consortium, which works with workers, NGOs and unions to investigate violations of the Code of Conduct. Over the last 5 years, we have had several great victories.

However, now some good factories are losing orders. Brands say that they are too expensive. The BJ&B factory in the Dominican Republic now has 500 workers, when it used to have 3,500. Nike and Puma have pulled their work out of a union shop in Thailand. To address this, USAS now is fighting for a new program, the Designated Supplier Program. Under the program, brands must source from good union factories, and must pay enough to the factories so that workers can make a living wage. So far, 11 universities have signed on to the program, including Duke, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Cornell.

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**Gilberto García, Centro de Estudios y Apoyo Laboral, El Salvador**

I work with Just Garments and support worker organizing at the Labor Studies and Support Center. Our work started with organizing at the factory Tainan, a Taiwanese factory where workers right to organize was not respected. The factory closed after 3 days, but with support from allies, the campaign continued. Workers in Cambodia at the same company refused to accept orders moved from Tainan after the factory closed. Tainan workers were blacklisted, and the Worker Rights Consortium started investigating the situation. Many universities stopped buying from Lands End who had been a customer of the factory.

Recently, we have talked with the owner of Kukdong factory in Mexico, who has been concerned about the loss of orders. If factories that are part of the movement fail, there is great danger for the movement. We must support the unionized and worker-organized companies. We are hoping that Kukdong could sell fabric to Just Garments, and that we can work together. We are sharing work with the Fair Trade Zone cooperative in Nicaragua.

In El Salvador, when workers take control and manage a factory on their own, it is a challenge to the established power. The work of the Worker Rights Consortium is very important. Adidas and Nike are now...
doing tours of the factories and the Fair Labor Association is doing more work. That shows that there is power to these campaigns.

We need to close the circle between the organizing of workers and the distribution of the product. As we close the circle and the powers are threatened, workers know that there is support in the movement, which is a powerful message to send.

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**Marieke Eyskoot, Clean Clothes Campaign, Europe**

*Written presentation*

**Clean Clothes Campaigning on Ethical Public Procurement in Europe**

**Introduction**

My name is Marieke Eyskoot, and I am European Coordinator of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) to improve working conditions in the global garment industry. I coordinate the 11 European campaigns the CCC now has in 10 European countries. Each national campaign is a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) and trade unions, and all campaigns cooperate at the European level. The CCC has four main areas of work:

- **Direct solidarity**: Supporting workers, trade unions and NGOs in producer countries.
- **Company work**: Putting pressure on companies to take responsibility to ensure that their garments are produced in decent working conditions.
- **Citizen mobilization**: Raising awareness among consumers by providing accurate information about working conditions in the global garment and sportswear industry, in order to mobilize citizens to use their power as consumers.
- **Government activation**: Exploring legal possibilities for improving working conditions, and lobbying for legislation to promote good working conditions and for laws that would compel governments and companies to become ethical consumers. This includes putting pressure on governments to take responsibility to ensure that the garments they buy are produced in decent working conditions.

It won’t surprise you that it is in the last area of work that our campaigning on ethical public procurement has evolved. I’ll try to quickly guide you through the history, goals and leverage, the activities and successes in the various CCCs, and the future plans and challenges of the project.

First some words on European public procurement and the work wear industry, as the situation may be somewhat different from the one in the United States.

**European shopaholics**

The European governments are massive shopaholics. Each year, towns
and cities across Europe spend a huge amount of money on clothing for city services such as the fire department, cleaning, and public transport.

The European work wear market is a large market: between one quarter and one half of all European employees wear work wear. In 2001, the European work wear market was worth $3.59 billion, the equivalent of 306.2 million pieces of work wear. The market is expected to grow by 2.5 percent yearly to $4.27 billion in 2008. The average annual work wear spending per capita is estimated to be between 75 and 100 euros.

Work wear is often purchased through procurement procedures by public authorities. Experts estimate public procurement to be responsible for 60 percent of total work wear sales in the Netherlands.

Until recently, however, how well or badly the workers who make this work wear are treated was not a factor in their purchasing decisions. But all that is starting to change.

**Public procurement**

Governments don’t just make laws; they are also consumers. In most cases in Europe, the Procurement Directives of the European Union apply to their purchasing practices. In the European Union, work wear companies from all member states must be able to tender for public contracts, regardless of their country of origin. Local governments are not free to make their procurement decisions.

Nevertheless, governments have a key role to play in ensuring that good labor standards are enforced by including social (and environmental) criteria in their procurement procedures. In the new directives this is not very clearly stated, but still possible.

**Campaigning on public procurement**

The CCC believes that all work wear worn by public workers should be produced in workplaces that respect workers' rights. Through community-council targeted action, lobby and research, the CCC is already seeing positive results. Our goal is to get all levels of government to buy ethically produced work wear.

The CCC message is:
- Human rights for our tax money.
- Governments should be model consumers.

**The history of CCC campaigning on ethical public procurement**

Around 1999, European interest in governmental buying increased through other movements, such as anti-nuclear cities campaigns and the Local Agenda 21 of the United Nations. The idea was that something similar could be asked from local authorities: ask them to take responsibility for something that happens internationally because they are a part of that. For the CCC it was also a way of involving local groups with global issues (something that organizations in the United States seem to have succeeded in very well).

**CCC France** started working on Clean Clothes Communities in 1999. They had a national campaign about school
purchases, "Pour l’école, consommons éthique", with the help of city halls.

**CCC Netherlands** started with targeting local communities in 2002 as part of the local elections campaign. They wrote sample paragraphs for political programs, and tried to influence decision making at the political level. Belgians were very interested from the start as well.

The Clean Clothes Communities project grew out of these activities.

**Clean Clothes Communities**

A city or municipal authority that wants to become a "Clean Clothes Community" first adopts a resolution that says that only work wear made under good labor conditions will be purchased. They then have to formulate an ethical procurement policy and develop a plan of action so that within a specified period of time buying "clean" uniforms becomes a reality.

Before they start, they need to determine exactly who is responsible for the purchases, who their suppliers are, where their current uniforms are actually produced, what is known about the labor conditions there, and which labor criteria they now want to take into account.

**Campaigns and successes in different countries**

In **France** no fewer than 250 communities, large and small, have adopted a resolution to take labour standards into account when tendering for new clothing orders. The campaign has developed a model resolution, and a guide on how to implement it.

In **Belgium North**, 72 municipalities have become Clean Clothes Communities. In addition, the Clean Clothes at Work project has been set up in cooperation with two unions. The purpose is to get people in the workplace to look critically at the clothes that their employers make them wear and to ask for "clean clothes."

In Amsterdam, the **Netherlands**, the Dutch CCC wrote a "guide" for the purchase of clean work, following a

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**Clean Clothes Communities Model Resolution**

**Communities should:**

- Demand that suppliers accept and implement the CCC model code of conduct.
- Demonstrate compliance with the CCC code.
- Publicly disclose any efforts made and results achieved to comply with the code.
- Publicly disclose where they are sourcing and in what circumstances (optional: disclose a list of suppliers).
- Form an accountable task group that is responsible for the development of implementation.
- Support the creation of a European Fair Wear Foundation.
- Act to promote the labor rights of garment workers (through lobbying at the national and European level).

resolution adopted by the City Council in December 2000. The guide was presented in 2004 to the thirty city employees who handle purchasing
In 2004, Amsterdam won an award for this handbook from the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) for governments who integrate sustainability into their buying practices. Meanwhile, the city of Enschede became the first Dutch city to implement the procedures. In Spain, an extensive program on ethical procurement was initiated in the Catalonia region in September 2004, with three different local governments involved: Barcelona, Manresa and Badalona. Setem hopes to extend the program to Spain in general.

**CCC Germany** has been carrying out a questionnaire, revealing that 78% of the communities did not know where their work wear was produced and 83% of communities said that ethical standards are not part of the criteria for procurement.

One commonly heard problem in Germany is that many communities think they are purchasing ethically just because they are not buying clothes produced by children, forgetting other ILO conventions. The Campaign has also identified that work wear companies need more information.

**CCC Sweden** has launched a new public procurement in 2006 to persuade cities to buy ethically-produced work wear. Focusing on local politicians and civil servants, the CCC will market ethical purchasing as “modern” and “trendsetting” and provide best practices and success stories, readymade resolutions and guidance on procurement practices based on research on the purchasing policies in six Swedish regions.

**Recent and future developments and challenges**

**Research**

Past campaigning experience has made it clear that it is vital to understand the make-up of the market you are dealing with. The CCC feels it is necessary to be able to confront the work wear companies themselves with their responsibility to ensure decent working conditions. The CCC wanted to extend its knowledge about the work wear market, and expand possible entry points for the Clean Clothes Communities project.

In April 2005 the CCC commissioned the Dutch-based Centre for Research on Multinational Companies (SOMO) to research the CSR performance of work wear companies. To kick off the research, national CCC coalitions compiled lists of the biggest work wear companies supplying their (local) authorities. The research focused on seven of those companies from different countries, and of various sizes and backgrounds. SOMO investigated their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and implementation, supply chain structure, and past history of labor rights' violations.

**Research conclusions**

Based on SOMO’s research we can conclude that labor issues are not a priority for the companies. The
statements on worker rights are quite superficial. Furthermore, for most of the companies it is not clear if a monitoring system exists. Implementation, engagement and verification of fair labor standards are not clear. Work wear companies are lagging behind enormously when it comes to supply chain responsibility, possibly due to lack of public campaigning and pressure from communities.

Supply chain

The work wear sector is under-researched with respect to social, environmental and economic issues. As there are many similarities between fashion and work wear production, for example the outsourcing of production and the manufacturing itself, it seems very plausible that similar violations are occurring in the work wear sector as well.

There is a big need for follow-up research to increase our knowledge of supply chain conditions and to “map” the industry. We are working together with our partner organizations in Eastern Europe (because much work wear comes from Eastern Europe) not just to generate case studies, but also to shape the ethical public procurement campaign.

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Lori Ryan, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace

Groundbreaking work has been done at Ontario Catholic school boards that have affiliated with the Worker Rights Consortium. Canada has a publicly funded Catholic school system. Ontario has 34 Catholic school boards, with over 500,000 students. A pilot project will start with the Worker Rights Consortium involving nine school boards that require students to wear uniforms. Each school board will pay a fee to the project, with a total cost of $100,000 per year for a two year pilot project. There will be two investigations per year. This should eventually grow to cover all school boards.

The campaign started with organizing around the visit of the Pope to Canada. A Catholic youth organization wanted to live up to the Catholic tradition of social justice. Five years of effort followed. We looked at other examples of Catholic sweatfree policies, such as the archdiocese of Newark, and the good work done by the New York Labor-Religion Coalition. One large uniform supplier, McCarthy’s, would not provide any information about working conditions. Students brought this issue to their school board in York demanding a Code of Conduct and affiliation with the Worker Rights Consortium. Catholic bishops sent letters to all the Catholic schools. Public shaming was effective. Eventually the code was passed unanimously. The Board initially said it had no money for this program, but students started raising money, and then the money was found.

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**Bjorn Claeson, SweatFree Communities**

Written presentation

**Activism Versus Professionalism in the U.S. Sweatfree Movement**

Bjorn Claeson, SweatFree Communities

I would like to raise a question I have been thinking about recently -- especially after the City of Los Angeles hired “sweatfree administrator” to enforce sweatfree law, which no doubt is a sign of success of the sweatfree movement and great work in California – a question of activism versus professionalism in the sweatfree movement.

The question presumes the success of the sweatfree movement in that we will get people in professional capacities working in cities, states, and monitoring agencies, playing important roles enforcing sweatfree procurement legislation.

The new professions will be absolutely necessary. In fact, Los Angeles’ Sweat-Free Administrator is historic: the first member of a new profession. SweatFree Communities is advocating for legislation that includes funding for sweatfree administrators.

But how do we make sure that professionalism doesn’t dissipate movement? How do we make sure that sweatfree activists do not become sweatfree administrators?

Instead, how do we make sure that the civil society movement grows along with new professions? And that for every new professional there are 10 or 100 new activists?

If we have learned one thing thus far in the sweatfree movement it is that the sweatfree procurement laws are only as strong as the movement. The most wonderful sounding words on paper do not mean a thing without a grassroots movement educating their communities and agitating to make sure those words are translated into action.

As Wade Crowfoot said yesterday, even in San Francisco it takes a strong coalition of activist to “scare” civil servants into action.

At its best, the sweatfree movement is broad and enthusiastic, has lots of leaders and even more supporters.

There are:

- Youth-led sweatfree campaigns that convince decision makers that
Sweatfree procurement policies are tools we can and should use to hold corporations accountable for labor practices in the United States and elsewhere.

- Small faith-based initiatives, such as social justice committees in Catholic churches advocating for sweatfree procurement as a moral matter.
- Unions and strong coalitions between labor and religious organizations who see common interest between sweatshop workers, low-income workers, and unionized workers wherever they may be.
- Laid-off workers who tell decision makers: “I was there. Sweatshops hurt all of us.”
- Community members united in their cry: “Not with our tax dollars. Not in our name.”
- Students who want to make their voices heard because: “It’s our communities, our future, our jobs at stake.”

All these constituencies and many more are active in the sweatfree movement. It is really a moving experience to go to public hearings on sweatfree legislation in city halls or state houses where workers, small businesses, students, people of faith, women’s groups, unions, high school students, democrats, greens, republicans all speak, offering heartfelt and eloquent testimony in support of the sweatfree movement, often drowning out the one or two people who have come to speak in opposition.

These many voices from so many walks of life are what convince decision makers do what they may have thought impossible. (After all, how can they know or have any responsibility for working conditions halfway across the world?) This grassroots movement is what convinces them to pass good legislation in city after city, state after state.

But adopting legislation is not the end for the sweatfree movement.

Sweatfree procurement policies are tools we can and should use to hold corporations accountable for labor practices in the United States and elsewhere.

Because sweatshops is not a bad apple here and there that cities can filter out from pool of bidders, but a standard business practice in apparel & other global industries even "sweatfree" cities and states will purchase products made in abusive conditions. The question then is: how do we use institutional leverage to improve abusive conditions in factories that supply our cities and states? How do we use the leverage of large public purchasers to support worker struggles in those factories?

A profession of sweatfree administrators, while indispensable to the enforcement of the new sweatfree policies, will never realize the promise of sweatfree procurement laws on their own without the knowledge and networks of the civil society movement, or the commitment and moral indignation of the activists.

Activists have an important role to play developing relationships with workers and worker advocacy organizations in different parts of the
world so that they can call attention to worker rights violations at factories producing for U.S. public institutions. It is also important that activists educate their communities, bringing global worker voices to community forums and helping to raise expectations that their local governments will be part of the solution.

Our next challenge is to develop productive working relationships between activists and administrators in communities across the country. Just as we have an evolving network of sweatfree campaigns, we need a network of public officials who are implementing the sweatfree procurement policies, and forums where the campaigns and the officials can learn how to work together.

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_Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium_

The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) is an achievement of the anti-sweatshop movement. Just six years ago, it was just a concept, written by students and academics. Students campaigned for it. Now the WRC represents 153 colleges and universities. It uses the Codes of Conduct to improve labor conditions and develops relationships with workers and their allies on the ground.

One example is in Indonesia. The WRC investigation team documented abuses and for the first time in this zone, the workers won health care coverage. In Kenya, there were mandated 24 hour shifts. The WRC investigation led the factory to recognize the union, the first in the Mambazo free trade zone. In Haiti, workers organizing were fired at gunpoint. The WRC exposed this violence and got union recognition for the workers.

Recently, the WRC has been awarded a contract with Los Angeles, a one year test project. Also, WRC has a Catholic school board contract in Ontario, Canada.

The goals of the pilot projects are: one, to expand the WRC to work with cities and states; two, to ensure that city and state policies have an impact like the universities; and three, to use the projects to learn about government procurement, and figure out the most effective ways to expand WRC’s work.

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_Wade Crowfoot, San Francisco Mayor’s Liaison to the Board of Supervisors_

I represent Mayor Gavin Newsom in San Francisco. Last fall, the city passed a sweatfree ordinance. San Francisco buys $600 million worth of products each year. The new law prohibits the city from buying

It’s your tax dollars, so do this work with a sense of entitlement. This is the right cause.
sweatshop goods. The law includes disclosure of factory locations and independent monitoring. The legislation passed because of the strong grassroots coalition that demanded the ordinance. Passing this or any policy requires three components: the problem is clear; a policy solution is identified; and there is the political will and power to address the problem.

There are six key important points to doing this work with administrators:

• There should be a broad, strong coalition that is together before coming to policy makers. In San Francisco, the coalition included activists groups, organized labor, workers, and a very credible celebrity person which also helped - Tom Hayden. The city needed to be frightened about this issue, so that something needed to be done.

• Connect with policy makers. The San Francisco Coalition brought elected officials' constituents to meet with them.

• Publicize the issue a lot. If necessary, start with alternative media. The public needs to know about the issue.

• Get to know the policy makers well. Don’t be too adversarial – elected officials want to do good work and need to be educated. Be respectful but persistent. You need to keep bringing the issue up. Commit to constant communication.

• Educate and understand what you are advocating. Is the policy workable and enforceable? You don’t want just a weak policy – you need disclosure and enforcement. In San Francisco, legal questions were raised and answered.

• Have good leaders in the movement. In San Francisco, Valerie Orth was the leader and worked persistently to make it happen.

It’s your tax dollars, so do this work with a sense of entitlement. This is the right cause.
Buy Local and Sweatfree

As the sweatfree movement uses government procurement policies to improve working conditions globally, outsourcing of garment factory jobs continue to create an economic and social crisis within immigrant working class communities in the United States. Find out how garment workers and advocates in San Francisco are using buy-local procurement policies to promote economic development.

Written presentation

Alex T. Tom, Chinese Progressive Association

Local and Sweatfree Procurement: The Chinese Progressive Association Campaign in San Francisco

Overview: San Francisco Chinese Population

The Chinese population represents approximately 25% of San Francisco’s population.

Low Level of Education

Chinese immigrants in San Francisco have lower education levels and earn lower wages than the average population. For example, 8.9% of the Chinese population has had no education, whereas only 4.9% of the general population has had no education.

Working Class Community

The average individual salary income for the Chinese population is $28,038, which is about $14,000 lower than the average population ($42,450). Most work in the restaurant and garment industry.

Immigrant Community

It is clear also that the Chinese population in San Francisco is still primarily recent immigrants with over 60% coming from 1980’s – 2000.

Overview: San Francisco Garment Industry

Backbone Of The Economy

In the 1990’s, there were over 20,000 garment workers in San Francisco. New immigrants would find their first jobs in a garment factory.

Demographics

99% of garment workers in San Francisco are low income, middle aged, mono-lingual Chinese immigrant women.

Labor Law Violations

The Chinese Progressive Association estimates that 75% of San Francisco garment workers are not paid the minimum wage. A majority of the workers face sweatshop conditions.

Impacts of Globalization

“Outsourcing” has created a social and economic crisis of mass unemployment and greater sweatshop conditions in San Francisco.
Workers Respond: Worker Justice Campaigns

In the economic recession of 2001, The Worker Organizing Center developed out of two large scale worker organizing campaigns – this was one of our key strategies.

- 220 laid off manufacturing workers from Lee Mah Electronics fought for and won a just settlement from their former employer totaling over $600,000.
- 240 laid off seamstresses from the Wins Garment factories fought to recover over $1 million in back wages owed to them and to hold their former sweatshop bosses accountable.

However, with the mass unemployment of San Francisco garment workers, we realized that this organizing strategy was not enough.

Decline of San Francisco’s Garment Industry since 1990

Current Statistics
- Less than 2,500 garment workers
- Around 150 factories (majority sub-contractors)
- Non-union factories (only one in San Francisco: Ben Davis)
- Most large factories (with over 100 workers) have shutdown. Now, most factories have about 15-20 workers, depending on the season
- Most orders are “fast turnaround” (1,000-3,000 garments)

Chinese Progressive Association Dislocated Garment Worker Assistance Program

With the mass layoffs in the garment industry, the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) realized the need of assisting workers in accessing their unemployment benefits and focusing on economic development issues.

- CPA has assisted over 1,200 garment workers laid-off from 32 different factories to access transitional employment benefits through the TAA program.
- In collaboration with San Francisco City College, San Francisco Labor Council, Chinese for Affirmative Action, CPA launched a pilot Garment Worker Retraining Program

San Francisco Local Preference Campaign

In the beginning, the proposed San Francisco Sweatfree Procurement Ordinance did not directly address the conditions of local sweatshops. In initial discussions, the Mayor’s Office did not support adding a “local preference” to the legislation.

In response, the CPA organized over 80 laid off garment workers to a press
conference and action before the Board of Supervisors final vote.

Before the press conference, the Mayor’s Office agreed to add language to the current legislation to have a local procurement ordinance.

Advocates also pushed the Mayor’s office to pass a resolution to support organic and fair trade procurement.

Our Analysis and Some Lessons Learned

• Local and Organic Procurement needs to be included in Sweatfree Procurement Campaigns to genuinely address the sweatshop conditions of workers globally and in the United States.

• Sweatfree Procurement Campaigns need to have workers or base building organizations that work with workers at the table. This will make the legislation stronger and diversify the movement.

• Globalization and “outsourcing” creates a social and economic crisis of unemployment and increases sweatshop conditions.
How to Build a Campaign and Make Your City/County/State Sweatfree

This interactive workshop will give you what you need to start, run, and win a campaign for a sweatfree policy.

- Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities
- Valerie Orth, Global Exchange

Notes: Liana Foxvog

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**Essential components of a sweatfree policy**

1) Identify the scope: does the policy apply only to apparel or to all procurement?

2) All contractors and subcontractors must meet a code of conduct which includes:
   - Compliance with local and international labor laws
   - Safe and healthy working conditions
   - Non-poverty wage
   - Overtime optional and compensated
   - Non-discrimination, no harassment or abuse
   - Ban on child labor
   - Freedom of association and right to collective bargaining

3) Suppliers must disclose factory locations in order to be considered for a contract. They must also disclose wages and information about factory conditions and sign an affidavit certifying that labor conditions meet the code of conduct requirements.

4) Affiliation with a non-profit consortium for independent monitoring of factory conditions, such as the Worker Rights Consortium.

5) Establish a sweatfree procurement advisory group that includes participation of worker advocacy and human rights groups to oversee the implementation of the policy.

**Running a campaign**

In small groups we discussed the key steps to running a campaign. These include:

1) Define Your Campaign Goal
2) Build a Coalition
3) Organize the Group
4) Research: Where Does Your Money Go?
5) Evaluate the Political Climate in Your Community
6) Educate
7) Mobilize and Work with the Media
8) Make Your Case to the Elected Body
9) Implementation and Monitoring
10) Celebrate your victories!

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**Resources**

- *Sample policy and other policy resources available at* [www.sweatfree.org/resources](http://www.sweatfree.org/resources)

- *Many more resources on how to run a campaign at* [www.sweatfree.org](http://www.sweatfree.org) and at [www.sweatfree.org/toolkit](http://www.sweatfree.org/toolkit)
Good Government for Worker Justice

*How can you create an open and transparent government that encourages a whole community to participate in policy-making and budgeting? How can you use such a government to advance the movement for worker justice?*

- Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy
- Celeste Taylor, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance

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**Written presentation**

**Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy**

**Participatory Budgeting Spreading Globally**

**Participatory Budgeting’s Origins and Popularity**

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is the process by which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources. PB programs are implemented at the behest of governments, citizens, NGOs, and civil society organizations to give citizens a direct role in deciding how and where public resources should be spent. These programs create opportunities for engaging, educating, and empowering citizens, which can foster a more vibrant civil society. PB also helps to promote transparency, which has the potential to reduce government inefficiencies and corruption.

Most citizens who participate in PB are low-income and have low levels of formal education. Historically, these groups have been excluded from budget decisions, but PB programs enable them to make choices that affect how their government acts.

Participatory Budgeting was initially implemented in twelve Brazilian cities in 1989-1990. By 2005 it had spread to well over 300 municipalities in more than 40 countries, including China, Dominican Republic (see article below), Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, and Uruguay.

The International Budget Project is now planning to be more engaged in the dissemination and monitoring of PB-related projects. Please see the final paragraph of this article to see how you can help us in our efforts.

**How does the Porto Alegre PB model work?**

Citizens participate in a series of government-sponsored meetings over an eight-month period, during which they vote for specific and general policies. Citizens are mainly focused on investment spending; 10-20% of Brazilian municipal budgets are available for spending on new public works. Citizens first vote for general policies, establishing the main priorities for this new spending on infrastructure, housing, or health care. Citizens then vote for specific
projects, such as paving their street or opening a health care clinic in their neighborhood.

To distribute resources and to organize citizen participation, Porto Alegre was divided into 12 administrative districts. Citizens attend meetings in their local districts. Votes are held within the district in order to encourage competition and solidarity among individuals from similar socio-economic backgrounds. For example, low-income residents compete against other low-income residents rather than against middle and high-income residents.

In order to promote social justice, resources are distributed among the 12 districts according to need - the more intense the poverty, the greater the level of resources that the district will receive. Therefore, the poorest district will automatically be allocated higher levels of resources than the wealthiest district.

Citizens also vote for delegates to represent their interests during final budget negotiations and policy implementation. The "PB Delegates" engage in oversight functions to ensure that corruption is limited and projects are completed. In addition, these "PB delegates" act as intermediaries between the government and their local communities.

There are no narrow, "set-in-stone" rules governing Participatory Budgeting. Rather, local governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Non-Governmental Organizations, and citizens meet their own needs and goals by modifying the basic set of rules established in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989.

For participatory budgeting to be most successful, the following conditions must be met:

- There must be strong government support for the delegation of authority directly to citizens.
- Government must prepare and distribute high-quality budget and policy planning documents to citizens.
- Government must be willing to transform the way in which policy decisions are made at the local level.
- Government must have sufficient resources to implement public infrastructure projects selected by citizens.

As for citizens and civil society organizations:

- Citizens must be able to decide on what public projects they'd like money to be spent on.
- CSOs and citizens must be willing to work closely with government officials.
- CSOs and citizens must be willing to use PB's public format to pressure government officials and publicly denounce wrongdoing and/or inaction.

Resource:

http://www.internationalbudget.org/resources/newsletter30.htm#AIDS

Information is Power!
The current crisis in Pittsburgh didn't happen overnight. It results from more than a decade of bad policy and mismanagement by elected and appointed officials. As a result, City residents must now suffer and pay for something which was largely perpetrated behind their backs.

But how could this happen? It's because there is currently no effective mechanism for city residents to learn for themselves what is really going on inside their government. They have been unable to give their informed consent or hold their public officials accountable.

What can we do about it? The best answer is to pass the proposed Open Government Amendment to the Pittsburgh City Charter, but to do that we must first place it on the ballot in 2006 and that requires collecting 10,000 signatures from Pittsburgh voters.

In order to make the needed changes and mandate a more open government, we must amend the City Charter. The Charter is a document which lays out the form and functions of City government, much the way the United States and our state constitutions set the structure and requirements for their levels of government. To accomplish this from the citizen level, we must use Pennsylvania's process of Initiative and Referendum.

The Initiative and Referendum process places a question on the election ballot asking voters to approve or reject the proposed change. To get the question on the fall ballot (the Initiative part of the process), we must finish getting approximately 10,000 signatures by August 3rd from people registered to vote in the City of Pittsburgh. Then we need to get people to the polls in November to vote (the Referendum part) to approve the amendment.

The Amendment would delete a present City Charter provision for Community Advisory Boards (dissolved by City Council three years ago) and in its place create provisions for:

- Online access to all city records which are open to public review under Article 8 of the City Charter.
- Cable casting and/or web casting of all meetings, hearings, and proceedings which the state's Sunshine Law requires be open to the public.
- Interactive ability to comment, ask questions, and participate via the Internet as is currently provided under the state's Sunshine Law for members of the public when present in person.
- All information on matters up for public hearings must be available at the time of the hearing's advertisement.
- Substantive change to a bill before Council constitutes a new
introduction for the purposes of public participation requirements.

- Establishment of a new body for proactive public participation called a Citizen Advisory Panel.

The Citizen Advisory Panel ("CAP") proposal includes:

- Open membership and no size limit; virtually any person without a "conflict of interest" can join at any time and begin having a say.
- All agenda items for Council meetings and all presentations of new bills must be explained to the CAP, with questions and answers, before going to Council.
- The administration and Council can make presentations to the CAP to inform it about issues of their concern.

The CAP and its committees can investigate issues, hold hearings, develop proposals and make its own presentations to Council and the administration.

- A representative of the CAP has a non-voting seat at the table in Council Committee meetings and can participate equally in discussions and deliberations.
- The CAP can educate and inform the public about city government affairs and public concerns.

Resource:

http://www.openpgh.org/index.shtml
Organizing in the Age of CAFTA and the WTO

How do trade agreements affect sweatfree policies? What campaign efforts can we join to stop harmful trade agreements?

Written presentation

Larry Weiss, Citizens Trade Campaign

Much of what SweatFree Communities is working to accomplish is, of course, illegal – or in line to become illegal – under the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and various Free Trade Agreements. So you might think of yourselves as part of a creative civil disobedience movement.

WTO Agreement on Government Procurement:
- Does not allow discrimination against a product or service, or a product or service provider, based on how the product was produced.
- Procurement threshold @ $500,000
- 38 nations currently signers (only Hong Kong China, Singapore, and possibly Israel, are pertinent)
- 10 more in process of joining (Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Oman, Panama, Chinese Taipei)
- Observers: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Georgia, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Mongolia, Oman, Panama, Republic of Armenia, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Turkey

Additionally, state-level government procurement rules are increasingly a big part of so-called bilateral free trade agreements, including the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). States are bound to these rules only if they consent to be part of the agreements; cities and other governments below the state level are not covered so far.

Resources

- Information on Citizens Trade Campaign at www.citizenstrade.org
- Citizens Trade Campaign state coalitions urged to work on sweatfree policies when not in high campaign mode. There is a strategic logic of pursuing these two tracks.

After Victory... Sweatfree Legislation: A Tool to be Used

Examples of how to use sweatfree procurement policies to support worker struggles for better working conditions, while creating stronger grassroots organizations.

- Sean Donahue, Peace through Interamerican Community Action
- Yannick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye
- Mike Howden, Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign
- Sally Kim Cass, SUNY Albany, United Students Against Sweatshops

Notes: Natalia Rudiak

Sean Donahue, Peace through Interamerican Community Action (PICA), Maine

Maine has lost 10,000s of manufacturing jobs in the past years. Maine workers are not in competition with other workers; rather they are working under the same economic conditions. Lots of workers began to say, “Workers are being played off against each other.” For example, Hathaway shirt factory workers went under because they couldn’t keep up with lower and lower Wal-Mart prices.

Two examples of gaps in the Maine sweatfree law:

1) Activists filed a complaint with the State of Maine about conditions at a Gildan factory in Honduras. The State Division of Purchases investigated, said there was a problem, and tried to resolve it. But Gildan decided to cut and run. The State didn’t have leverage to go back to Gildan to say, “We’re not going to contract with you this time because you cut and ran.”

2) UNITE HERE filed a complaint with State of Maine over a Cintas contract. Uniforms supplied to the state were being made in unsafe and unfair conditions in Haiti. The State demanded that Cintas address complaints and get an independent monitor. We learned about an additional weakness in the law: Cintas went with an “independent” monitor accredited by Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production (WRAP), an industry front group. This monitoring group had prior contracts with Cintas, consulting with them on how to use a “modular production” model which groups workers into small groups that have to meet production quotas – a basis for unpaid overtime. This was a problem: the law didn’t define what “independent monitoring” really was.

The Purchasing Agent felt that the relationship with UNITE HERE was too adversarial, and that she didn’t have enough reliable information about worker rights violations to terminate the contract with Cintas.

Next the Maine Clean Clothes Alliance ran a campaign for a stronger law. The law was adopted in March 2006. Now:
• There is a much clearer process for workers or worker rights advocates to file complaints about worker rights violations.

• There are clear penalties for non-compliance with the Code of Conduct. The state can terminate contracts with businesses that don’t address problems in their factories.

• The state was empowered to actually get its own sweatfree procurement advisory group with half business and half worker-advocate representation. The businesses will be Maine-based.

But in order to effectively enforce sweatfree procurement policies we need a consortium of cities and states to pool resources for investigations of common supplier factories.

We also need a consortium of organizing and coalition movements.

PICA can’t afford to maintain a relationship with every union federation in the world – we have some relationship with unions in El Salvador and Haiti. Each sweatfree community could build networks in one, two or three countries and communicate worker rights violations to the whole network.

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**Yannick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye**

The unemployment rate in Haiti is more than 70%. To provide employment, the government tries to get companies to invest in Haiti, meaning that they will come to exploit workers. They will pay workers low wages in facilities with poor working conditions.

Sweatfree procurement is a tool that workers in Haiti could use to force companies that come to their country looking for cheap labor to change their way of doing business.

Most workers are internal migrants who have moved from their local
Labor organizations, solidarity movements and independent monitors must build long-term relationships. Don’t just go and come to one factory, get the information, and never come back. ... We reach our hand out to you; you reach your hand out to us. Holding hands we can tell the politicians, “We are in this together and this is what we want.”

Workers in countries like Haiti are fighting to change their society. We must change the global policy of building more sweatshops to support a country’s development, which is funded by global institutions. When poor countries need loans they tend to abide by the rules of the global economy. The resulting policies, such as sweatshops, are not good for workers.

We are one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, but that doesn’t mean we don’t know our rights. By fighting to change the labor conditions, we want to change who has power. And to change our society. Sweatfree procurement is a tool, but just a small step.

We reach our hand out to you, you reach your hand out to us. Holding hands we can tell the politicians, “We are in this together and this is what we want.”

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Mike Howden, Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign
The Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign started about four years ago and passed our first ordinance three years ago on the city level. In December 2005, we got the school board to adopt a policy and in December 2006 the county passed the ordinance.

Victories and successes depended on relationships: supporters include the president of the labor council, church members, and immigrant communities.

The hardest part of the campaign is getting the policy implemented. A survey showed that in most places where ordinances have been adopted no one knows about them.

Ordinances require that contractors respond to affidavits. Dickie’s said they can’t provide information about factories because it was proprietary. Our city ordinance said otherwise and so the city broke the contract.

One of the things that the Milwaukee sweatfree campaign naively did was require a non-poverty wage requirement, but no one developed a wage table. Now we’ve developed it and it’s available at www.sweatfree.org/nonpovertywages. This is a starting point.

We know that VF Corporation – a major supplier of police and firefighter uniforms – is lying when they say that they are paying a non-poverty wage and that they are allowing to people to unionize. So how do we enforce the policy against VF Corporation? At least the wage is concrete enough that we can challenge the wages reported in the company’s affidavits.

Once you have an ordinance, you have to work with the hired administrators who have long-time relationships with vendors and suppliers. We found that some of the same companies that they have been using all along were sweatfree, but many were not. They challenged some, and the companies showed them a different wage table. We have a labor lawyer who is now challenging these wage claims.

A few other points:

- The campaign has a good educational component with Catholic education partners who sponsor trips to the border.
- Public schools are a decentralized system. A real waste of tax-payer money because each principal decides separately where to buy t-shirts, uniforms, etc.
- UNITE HERE and SEIU must educate their locals to make sure they no longer buy sweatshop clothing.
Discussion

**Jeremy Blasi, Worker Rights Consortium**

The cost of independent monitoring has to do with economies of scale. The Worker Rights Consortium has 153 university affiliates. Many work with the same companies, such as Reebok and Nike. The minimum fee for colleges is $1000.

You have to understand the premise – the baseline – of the global garment industry is a sweatshop. Two thirds of the apparel industry in the United States is a sweatshop – that's even what the Department of Labor says. The concept of monitoring doesn't really apply to garments; there is a problem in virtually every single factory. It’s like factory manufacturers are all working from the same handbook. It’s like a firefighter monitoring a burning fire.

Policy enforcement is to try to create a solution by supporting worker efforts to organize and improve their own conditions. It’s a complaint-based system. Change is sustainable when workers are empowered to know their rights. It’s a laborious process. Brands fight unions tooth and nail; factories will do everything in their power to prevent unionization because their costs will go up. In some sense this does increase labor costs; if they know they won’t get a break in price from their customers, they’ll close the factories and move down the street.

Ultimately unless we change the overall system, we’re not going to get very far. Cities and states can learn from students …. In order to see sustainable change, the process of brand buying must change. They need to identify factories they are going to work with, and not switch up every few months or weeks.

Almost every factory we're dealing with is a sweatshop. What is needed is change on a broad scale. Cities need to work together to have the leverage to force brands to change.

No order smaller than a container shipment is economical. We must produce purchasing collectives to buy from factories that are doing the right thing.

**Yannick Etienne**

Maybe the funds for monitoring could support a strike fund or workers’ fund. Let’s say you come, you make your report, you pass your ordinance, and three months after you get that information the workers lose their job for whatever reason. I am in danger because of this. Adding this to policies would be a great help.
Models for Verification and Enforcement of Sweatfree Policies

How can U.S. schools, cities, and states use the Worker Rights Consortium to enforce sweatfree procurement policies? How can Dutch and other European cities use the Fair Wear Foundation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these models for verification and enforcement? How can they improve? And what is the role for activists in enforcing sweatfree procurement policies?

• Jantien Meijer, Fair Wear Foundation
• Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium

Facilitator: Katherine Stecher, Campaign for Labor Rights

Notes: Valerie Orth, Global Exchange

Jantien Meijer, Fair Wear Foundation

The Clean Clothes Campaign started in the end of the 1980s. In 1994, negotiations between unions and businesses in the Netherlands started. In 1999 the Fair Wear Foundation was established. The actual work started in 2001.

The Fair Wear Foundation has campaign, business associations, and unions on the board. They have equal decision-making power. In the United States, it may be strange to have business associations on the board; in Europe, that makes sense. It works well. Business associations want initiatives with credibility to work.

Companies are “participants” in the Fair Wear Foundation. We have about 20 members; eight of them are companies that produce for local authorities. They endorse a code of conduct, and they accept responsibility for monitoring. We don’t require public disclosure. The Fair Wear Foundation verifies whether they monitor adequately.

We have six staff members. We don’t have staff overseas. Instead we work with local partners who write background studies about the level of law enforcement, working conditions, etc. We train people in every country as auditors, usually teams of three people with different expertise. We always include a female labor NGO to do worker interviews; this is essential for balance. We set up worker complaint procedures in every country so that workers can file complaints if their rights are violated. And we instruct companies on how to negotiate with the supplier to implement correction plan.

The Clean Clothes Campaign has started a campaign about public procurement. The difference between U.S. and Dutch policies is that the Clean Clothes Campaign doesn’t ask public authorities to become a member of the Fair Wear Foundation. First, they ask the authorities to have a policy with criteria for labor standards and verification, and then demand companies to join the Fair Wear Foundation.

The actual work started in 2001.
Wear Foundation. They don’t expect local authorities to become experts in verification; that is the role that Fair Wear Foundation takes.

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**Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium**

Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) operates independently of the corporations. We identify places where workers themselves are working to improve conditions and want international support. We do a relatively small number of investigations. Most investigations are done through a complaint basis; workers will complain about worker rights violations through NGOs or human rights groups.

The WRC investigates factories where we have leverage (more than a few % of contracts are with licensees of university members of the WRC). We assemble a team that consists of staff and local labor rights or environmental and health experts. The investigation team conducts an assessment, and when violations are found put together a plan for corrective action that companies can use. This process lasts anywhere from six months to two years.

The WRC is starting a contract with the city of Los Angeles – a one-year pilot project, doing the same work as with universities. In the long term, however, the work is only sustainable if there is a large number of cities, states, school districts that pass policies and work together to create a consortium. Just as one factory usually produces for many universities; one factory may produce for many cities or states. The WRC has more leverage in factories that produce for several universities; the same will hold true for factories that produce for cities and states.

**Discussion**

*What about buying straight from worker collectives?*

**Steffan:** In the Designed Suppliers Program the idea is to consolidate university production into a smaller set of factories, including worker collectives, so they have clout, and these factories would be able to maintain higher labor standards. This is what the WRC is working towards. Factories often move, which erodes gains. The Designated Supplier Program would change the way they do business.

*Can you clarify the auditing process?*

**Meijer:** There are two types of audits: monitoring and verification. Companies set up their own monitoring system with the Fair Wear Foundation consulting on how to do that, and using Fair Wear teams. Verification audits we do one our own to make sure that the monitoring system is working. But we haven’t
done that yet, because we’re present at all the monitoring audits. And we prefer that companies spend money rectifying their wrongs rather than going through another auditing process.

*Are factory conditions public? Do you post information about what you do, so we can match it up with, say, Denver Public Schools factory disclosure?*

**Steffan:** Yes, we have a database, [www.workersrights.org](http://www.workersrights.org). It’s a possible point of collaboration.

**Jeremy Blasi, Worker Rights Consortium:** More on the designated supplier idea: For all universities, there could be about 150-200 factories making the $4 billion of collegiate apparel. But right now, there are about 4,000 factories doing university production, and probably more because there are subcontracting factories. The reason you only need 150-200 factories is that university production is just a tiny portion of what many factories make – this makes it hard because sometimes universities have no leverage. I think that a small network of good factories is the eventual solution for entities like the Denver School Board, which could eventually require to sourcing from those factories.

**Participant:** Clarification – there will be a public procurement database on sweatfree.org soon, but it is not up yet. It will be up soon! You will be able to go there and put in the purchasing information, and if there is an investigation report.

*How much of your work is complaint investigation vs. monitoring? How do you maintain independence in your process?*

**Meijer:** Over the past year we did 32 audits in six or seven countries. We received four complaints and investigated them. All audits are done on behalf of the companies themselves. We are primarily funded by the textile and garment union “solidarity fund” – paid both by businesses and unions.

*Is the relationship with companies tolerable? Is there a respect of the professionalism and ethical nature of what you are doing or is it ‘we’re not putting up with you, go away’?*

**Steffan:** It depends on the company and a lot on what we ask them to do. We can be reasonably successful getting them to do what they want to do in the long term, but have less success in the short term. Our main contact is usually with the Corporate Responsibility Office.

**Meijer:** Retailers hate us and they are setting up their own monitoring systems trying to undermine what we do. Fair Wear Foundation companies are fairly committed, with long-term relationship with suppliers.

*What happens when we put pressure on a company and they decide to close a factory? What happens to the workers?*

**Steffan:** If you improve conditions in a factory, the costs go up. This is a problem. Brands prefer to source from cheaper factories. We are trying to pressure brands to stay at factories. But we still have a long way to go in enforcing this. We can’t force companies to stay with a factory. Also,
sometimes factories close not because of worker organizing, but just because companies decide to cut and run to Asia from Central America, for example. It is Jeremy’s job is to make sure workers are getting severance payments when that happens. Right now he is dealing with a couple factories in Central America that collectively owe workers $1 million in severance and are refusing to pay it.

Meijer: We don’t have a solution yet to factory relocation.

Yannick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye: Maybe include in the sweatfree policy a strike fund or severance fund for workers who are laid off. Ask for companies to pay workers in the policy.

Participant: Maybe a policy can include “if you shut a factory, we will not work with you.”

Sean Donahue, PICA: The core of our work is cross border solidarity. The Worker Rights Consortium and Fair Wear Foundation are important allies but not the people who are doing the work for us. Maybe we should look at a model of an organizing consortium. Not every organization will have the resources to build long-term relationships with lots of different countries. Long-term cross border solidarity links will drive where investigations take place. We want our board to take a lead to get together with similar entities to figure this out.

Lori Ryan, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace: There is an Ontario no-sweat network that continues to come together. We don’t meet physically very often, but we keep the momentum going. We can get sucked into the institution, but we have to keep the activism going.

Dick Meyer, South Sound Clean Clothes Campaign (Olympia, Washington): Olympia is having a problem with the city saying they don’t have the resources and they can’t follow up sufficiently. The community group is in the position of pushing them to do more than they say that they are dong. They say “We are just a moderate size city, we can’t do this by ourselves.” A lot of it is to not be moderate and let the issue die.
A Day in the Life of an Independent Monitor

Are you still confused about what monitoring means? What does monitoring look like on the ground? This workshop will give you a behind-the-scenes look at the Worker Rights Consortium.

Jeremy Blasi, Worker Rights Consortium

The following are key points covered during the presentation and lengthy question and answer session that followed:

The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) is a factory monitoring organization that represents colleges and universities in the United States. The WRC assists these schools with the enforcement of labor rights codes of conduct at factories around the world that manufacture university logo apparel. The WRC began operations at the beginning of 2001.

Several key principles underlie the WRC’s design and monitoring program:

Independence from industry. The WRC’s founders – which included university administrators, students, and labor rights experts – believed there was a need for a monitoring agent that operated completely independently of the companies whose practices were being monitored, in terms of financing and programmatic control. Such independence was necessary to ensure credible, unbiased reporting. To this day, the WRC is the only major monitoring organization that is not financed by apparel corporations.

Transparency. The WRC’s founders believed that another key to credible, independent monitoring is a much greater degree of transparency regarding the factories making university apparel than is typical in the apparel industry. The WRC maintains an online database of all factories engaged in the production of logo apparel and publishes detailed reports regarding each factory that is the subject of an investigation. The premise is that the more that universities and the public at large know about what is occurring in these factories, the more likely it is that worker abuses will be eliminated.

Focus on Correcting Violations. The WRC’s monitoring program is primarily complaint-based (though it does conduct spot assessments as well). The complaint-based approach allows the organization to focus limited resources on addressing worker rights abuses at factories where change is needed most and on
the specific issues that workers identify as the most important. Resources can then be focused on fixing these abuses. The full involvement of workers in the monitoring process is the most critical element of sustainable code compliance.

The most common labor rights abuses that the WRC sees in factories include harassment and abuse of workers; forced and uncompensated overtime; and violations of the freedom of association (the right to organize and bargain collectively). Unfortunately, violations of worker rights in these (and other) areas are the norm in the global apparel industry, rather than the exception. Most factories in the industry violate a range of worker rights standards.

It is important to recognize that, while factories are surely to blame for violating worker rights, apparel brands contribute to these violations through their sourcing practices, including paying supplier factories prices so low that full compliance is not possible; demanding unrealistic turn-around times; and refusing to reward factories that do comply with worker rights standards by placing orders with these factories. For widespread improvements in the industry to occur, the sourcing practices of brands will need to change.

A recent example of the WRC’s monitoring work is the Sinolink garment factory in Kenya. The WRC conducted an investigation after receiving a complaint from workers. The investigation documented some extremely serious abuses of worker rights. These included locking workers in the factory over night and refusing to recognize a union legally elected to represent workers (including using state violence to squelch a legally constituted strike). The WRC communicated its findings to a university licensee whose goods were being produced in the factory; the licensee reinforced the WRC’s recommendations for corrective action. Management ultimately responded by recognizing the union and improving working conditions dramatically. It is now the only factory in Kenya’s Mombasa free trade zone to respect the associational rights of workers by recognizing a democratically elected union. However, despite these improvements, the factory has struggled to attract orders from U.S. brands and its future is uncertain.

A promising approach to make code of conduct enforcement more sustainable is the Designated Supplier Program, recently proposed by United Students Against Sweatshops. Under this program, university licensees would be required to produce university logo goods garments only in factories where workers are paid a living wage and are represented by a union or other representative worker body. In practice, this would amount to university licensees striking a new bargain with factories: the factories would offer an iron clad commitment to respect for worker rights in exchange for steady orders at reasonable prices. If a network of factories with such high standards were to emerge, they could also serve as a source of garments for companies, cities, and states that are seeking sweat-free apparel.
Next Steps in City and State Collaboration on Enforcement and Procurement

Prompted by the sweatfree movement, the Mayor of San Francisco has called for a city consortium to consolidate procurement power and enforce sweatfree procurement policies. Similarly, the Governor of Maine is calling on other governors to join him in a Governors Coalition for Sweatfree Procurement and Worker Rights. These initiatives are great opportunities to expand and strengthen our movement. How do we organize to make sure cities and states sign on to these coalitions?

• Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities
• Valerie Orth, Global Exchange

Facilitator: Alejandra Domenzain, Sweatshop Watch

Notes: Natalia Rudiak, Pittsburgh Antisweatshop Community Alliance

Valerie Orth, Global Exchange

In November 2005, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom sent a letter to 60 mayors around the country inviting them to join a sweatfree consortium to enforce sweatfree policies more effectively. Mayors were chosen based on cities that had adopted some kind of sweatfree policy and other progressive cities.

The letter is a tool for campaigners. Grassroots pressure is needed to get mayors to take action.

When people respond to Wade Crowfoot (at the San Francisco mayor’s office), he refers them to Valerie Orth, who describes what the legislation entails and how to build a campaign. The only person who has responded thus far is a city councilor in Providence.

The letter is at http://www.sweatfree.org/consortium/lettertomayors.pdf

Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities

This is a chance to build a national strategy and national momentum.

The letter from Maine Governor John Baldacci to all U.S. governors inviting them to join a Governors Coalition for Sweatfree Procurement and Worker

Rights helps open up a space for organizing. Activists can use the letter to encourage their state to take action and join the consortium.

The letter was sent on Feb. 28. Maine activists wrote it and it went through a
number of drafts. The letter and more details are at www.sweatfree.org/governorscoalition

The key demands are:

- Get your governor on the phone with Governor Baldacci.
- Get them to adopt a sweatfree-resolution (included in the packet from Governor Baldacci) or assign staff members to explore the resolution to be a part of a sweat-free coalition.

Next there will be a series of meetings with public officials. We need to figure out what we want this process to look like and claim a clear role for activists.

Discussion

**Question:** Should there be one big consortium? Should the focus right now be on governors' campaign? What about cities, counties, etc.?

**Answer:** Our larger vision is to create one big consortium for sweatfree policy enforcement and procurement with cities, states, counties, and school districts all together.

If a separate city consortium and a separate state consortium is created, these could be with the same independent monitor, and could also be merged into the same consortium. Hopefully the Worker Rights Consortium is the independent monitor and if that doesn't work for the WRC, we would create a new non-profit independent monitor that would have a board representing the constituencies of this campaign.

At the moment we have some momentum with the letter to governors. The letter to mayors can be used as a tool in campaigns to get cities on board. If there are counties and school districts that are interested to adopt policies, they can pass language stating they will become part of a consortium for enforcement and independent monitoring once it is created.

We should be aware of the political egos of the elected officials and their personalities. Think carefully about which politicians we want to have seen as the leaders in this campaign. Governors prefer to do outreach to each other and be contacted by other governors (rather than mayors). But we can shape the campaign so that it all comes together in one consortium eventually.

Language about joining the consortium is included in the model sweatfree policy available at www.sweatfree.org/resources. These cities have already adopted policies including language on consortium similar to that in the model policy: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Madison, and Providence. Toronto has expressed interest as well. In addition to trying to get mayors and governors talking to each other, we want to make sure that new sweatfree policies include language about the consortium and require a sweatfree procurement advisory group with participation from activists, which will be able to make sure consortium affiliation and enforcement happens. We should aim
to get this language included in Berkeley, Hartford, New Haven, Austin, Portland, Seattle, Missoula, and other cities where campaigns have started or may start soon.

**Question:** Are we ready to start publicizing widely before we know exactly what our ask is?

**Discussion:** Some people expressed a concern about doing active outreach until we have a clearer vision of exactly what the consortium will look like and how it will work. Others mentioned that we do have enough of a vision already explained in our documents. We will keep building the vision as we do outreach. We should be doing outreach now because the letters have gone out.

One person expressed that when you launch an initiative like this you have to be strong. If we do something half-way, that doesn't help us. There has to be a strategic discussion about whether we are strong enough to make this happen. It’s good that there’s energy but we should come together on these points rather than rush into launching a campaign before we're ready.

It was also noted that the letters from Newsom and Baldacci won't expire. We can keep using these letters. We should set our own timeline.

**Question:** Is the consortium focused only on apparel?

**Answer:** Most policies adopted are specific to apparel. Some recently adopted policies – Los Angeles and San Francisco for example – require the procurement advisory group to consider expanding policy application to other sectors.

To put this in perspective, San Francisco spends $600 million on goods each year; $2 million of that is garments. Much of our potential for leveraging purchasing power to support workers may lie in other sectors.

The letter from Governor Baldacci does say “apparel and other industries.” Would be most realistic is for the consortium to at least start with apparel. That's where the WRC has experience, where they have relationships with worker organizations, and the sector in which they are able to do independent monitoring. The sense of several people in the meeting is that we should start with a clear focus on apparel – that's where the momentum is, where there are the most relationships on the ground, and what's written in most policies. Later on if this gets rolling, advisory groups can look to considering other sectors, but we should get started with what's easier to attain.

**Question:** Which governors should be in the lead?

**Answer:** No staff person in Baldacci’s office should be the lead. The governor's office should take the lead from us. Baldacci doesn't have presidential aspirations, but it’s an election year, and he wants to take credit for this. He wants to say that
he's been able to get governors on board for a great cause. We need to set up a process in such a way that we can steer it.

Let’s focus on building momentum and getting the easiest governor on board, then the second easiest, etc. Maybe now Pennsylvania and New Jersey and Illinois might be the easiest. Should we bring a worker tour to these places first?

One person who is helping us link up with governors is Jim Tierney, former Attorney General of Maine. He personally knows a lot of governors.

**Question:** Should we try to identify a charismatic spokesperson for the campaign?

**Answer:** If Baldacci wants that. Would he himself be the person? Perhaps the Governor of Illinois would be a good possibility. Are their other charismatic people who aren't governors who we want to bring on board?

**Question:** What is the story of the campaign?

**Answer:** We need to identify the winning story, the human face to lift up as part of the campaign. It could be a laid-off worker in the United States, a sweatshop worker in the United States, a sweatshop worker overseas. Our outreach documents would include the story. A governor could stand up and say, “I support these people.”

**Discussion:** Strategy and Tactics

- Get the first three governors on board. Identify a common supplier that supplies to those states. For example, one of Leslee Scott’s factories in Bangladesh had a recent fire causing deaths of at least 84 young women and child workers. They supply some states. More research needed on this.

- Get public universities in specific states to offer positive statements to governors about their role in the WRC.

- There's a need to educate governors about the proposal and clarify the alternatives that we are proposing - and the one's we aren't proposing – and why that is. Why the status quo isn't working, how the WRC model works, why it's the best, and anticipate their questions and concerns. This could be done through written materials, phone calls, and face-to-face time.

- Propose scaled-back anti-sweatshop legislation that would call for several hearings with workers, mini-investigations to a bunch of factories, providing some facts about conditions, etc. It would probably be passed easier and cheaper.

- Funding needed for a staff person to work on consortium campaign full-time. Funding needed for a worker tour. Might there be an untapped staffer at the National Governor’s Association?

**Discussion:** Public education and research

- Raise up issues concerning low wage work in your community
- Look at prison clothes suppliers
- Identify a common supplier to emphasize
- Organize a worker tour (Bangladesh workers?); events would include low-wage or laid off workers local to the area
- Research amount of procurement by state
- Research Leslee Scott purchasers
- Get state procurement disclosure information.

Resources

- General campaign information: http://www.sweatfree.org/governorscoalition
What is Sweatfree?

A number of promising initiatives seek to end sweatshop exploitation by promoting sweatfree alternatives. The United Students Against Sweatshops has developed a Designated Supplier Program, requiring university licensees to source from factories that respect freedom of association and pay a living wage. A conference hosted by the University of Michigan last year explored the concept of “worker-voiced” products as common ground between the anti-sweatshop and fair trade movements. And TransFair USA has begun research into the possibilities and challenges of fair-trade certification for apparel. At the same time, a number of sweatfree campaigns are promoting sweatfree alternatives for their local communities based on a variety of “sweatfree” concepts. Can we build a stronger unified sweatfree-fair trade movement promoting the same kinds of alternatives?

- Bama Athreya, International Labor Rights Fund
- Chris Himes, TransFair USA
- Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops

Notes: Matthew Schumwinger, Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign; Trina Tocco, International Labor Rights Fund

Facilitator: Dick Meyer, South Sound Clean Clothes Campaign

Bama Athreya, International Labor Rights Fund

My job in this panel is to bring people up to speed and on same page with issues and to say that this question has been answered conclusively many times already.

In 1991 Levi Strauss adopted a code of conduct for its suppliers in response to campaign work and exposures of sweatshop conditions in Mexico, Saipan, and Southeast Asia. Reebok and Nike followed with their own codes of conduct. Very briefly, the codes said they would treat their workers fairly. No child labor. Some of the codes said, “right to bargain and collective organizing.”

1993-96 was the era of for-profit auditors. Nike hired Ernst & Young as an independent monitor, but they did not have a good labor rights record.

Then the Industry initiated something called WRAP – Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production.

Social Accountability International is a multi-stakeholder initiative. They have a big set of standards, including the right to a living wage and

It’s about getting production into empowered workplaces where workers themselves have the right to defend and negotiate their working conditions.

organizing. For-profit monitors monitor for them.
The Fair Labor Association also has for-profit auditors. All these initiatives, not to mention European initiatives that were parallel, guarantee right to associate on paper.

Where I come from and where we need to go: The goal was to create space for workers to organizer because this is the only way to create action on all other problems. I’ve gone through a decade of activism talking around this issue. Now it’s about getting production into empowered workplaces. The pattern has been, we’d win a victory, then the company would cut and run, and only two years later, we would lose the victory.

Sweatfree is beyond the lovely stuff in terms of codes of conduct, or multi-stake holder systems.

What is sweat free? It’s having an empowered workplace where workers themselves have the right to defend and negotiate their working conditions.

I am tired about explaining the criteria for monitoring freedom of association. Now we’re talking about putting your production into empowered workplaces. We’re not there yet in terms of how to make it practical and how to make it real.

The basic philosophy of the origins of the fair-trade movement was connecting farmers directly with consumers; it’s powerful to think about a parallel movement, linking us as consumers with empowered workplaces in apparel.

I’m curious to hear from Chris what is different about certification: why should we continue going down the road of certification? And if you’re not going to go down the certification route, how else do you link consumers to empowered workplaces?

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**Chris Himes, TransFair USA**

Fair trade certification is 18 years old; it started in Europe. It is eight years old in the United States. It is a set of prices, standards and trading criteria for goods produced in the poor world and sold in the relatively rich world.

Fair trade started small and has gotten bigger through work with unions and joint bodies. It has broadened beyond co-ops and become interested in apparel.

The fundamental tenets are:
- Minimum price (wage or wage and premium).
- Freedom of association, which is easier but not perfect for co-ops.
- Full transparency in trade and certification oversight.
- Pre-harvest financing to smooth out cash flows for farmers.

We are now in the beginning stages of a six month research pilot program. The big question is: Can fair trade certification be relevant to the garment and apparel industries?

We got interested in apparel because of:
- Growing popularity of Fair Trade with a 70% per year growth rate.
• European colleagues (UK, France, Switzerland) have begun certifying cotton. TransFair decided not to follow yet.

Can Fair Trade certification be relevant to problems in apparel manufacturing? The answer could be “no” for various reasons. We have hired consultants and have an advisory committee to pursue this question. We are interviewing workers, manufacturers, and monitors.

I’m a big fan of the Designated Supplier program. The big question is what do you care most about in terms of coverage?

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Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops

What is sweatfree? Why do we need to define it?

Participants: So we can make coherent demands of suppliers ... so I can feel confident in my purchase ... so we can set standards for companies ... because we’re trying to pass laws ... so we can build strategies to support workers and worker organizations.

For me, it is only important to define if it supports worker empowerment and supports their efforts to improve their conditions.

We know workers are organizing and that brands don’t want them to do this. Students said, can we support workers concretely by creating codes of conduct and and getting factory disclosures and creating the Worker Rights Consortium (which is independent of companies)? Over the past five years there have been concrete victories. Twelve to fifteen factories have been able to organize independent unions and improve conditions. They are models. This happened through concrete organizing from workers and students.

What’s happening now to these factories? They are being blacklisted from companies or losing orders. So USAS has to respond to this issue of cycles of victory and factory closure. Brands put pressure on factories to produce for less and less. This is a race to the bottom. How do suppliers deal with price pressure? They cut costs by putting pressure on the workers. This prevents contracts between workers and management that can improve standards.

"What is sweatfree" is a strategic question. These brands want nothing more than to say that they have a label that is sweatfree. But this is not what it is about. Will a label support worker organizing to improve their conditions?

So, what is solution? I don’t think there is one. But there may be something that can help: the Designated Suppliers program.

The Designated Suppliers program requires brands to source from factories with a worker voice. Why? Because workers are the best monitors. Monitoring is not necessary if there is a true worker voice. Price pressure will ease up if brands pay more for these factories. We want to limit collegiate factories from thousands to hundreds.
We launched the Designated Supplier program in December 2005 on over 40 campuses. So far 11 universities have signed on in principle to the Designated Supplier program. Implementation will be a collective process, but right now we are building political support.

“What is sweetfree” is a strategic question. These brands want nothing more than to say that they have a label that is sweatfree. This gets them off the hook. But this is not what it is about. Does organic and Fair-Trade cotton make a T-shirt sweat free? Will a label support worker organizing to improve their conditions?

Discussion

Participant (for Himes): What industry people you’re working with and are they financing your research on apparel fair trade certification?

Himes: We’re working with Levi’s, Maggie’s Organics, and consulting with Indigenous Designs. The research was started with a grant from the Levi’s, which is legally separate from Levi’s, the company. We work with 500 companies now in fair trade.

Maureen Quigley, TransFair consultant: We are reaching out to 30 companies small, medium, and large to understand challenges of supply chains and nuances. We’re also reaching out to 30 U.S. activists, unions, and fair trade organizations.

Himes: We consider ourselves independent; we’re non-profit. We will have our audit audited to verify our work.

Orth: Do you have to report back to the Levis Foundation?

Himes: Yes, we take no directions from them. We have to report what recommendations to FLOW. This is a low hanging fruit for cynics. A: add on from consultant. This is parallel to European efforts. Dual stakeholder engagement. We will publish report on website that will be non-attributable. But will make as transparent as possible. Have consulted with other groups.

Participant: I have two concerns: 1) On what level of the supply chain will certification happen? 2) Where in the process are voices from outside the United States involved in this? I would like to see on-the-ground worker input.

Himes: This is initial investigation and limited. We’re doing site visits with farmers to Cut, Make & Trim (CMT) factories in West Africa, India, etc. There would need to be much more rigorous participation on the ground if this were to go forward.

Participant: How would we have process to determine if the union is actually working for the workers?

Rutter: There are agreed upon standards about what is an independent, democratic organization.
The Worker Rights Consortium will do in-depth consultation on the ground. Companies and government unions will not be acceptable. That’s the main distinction.

**Jeremy Blasi, Worker Rights Consortium:** We’ve dealt with this issue before. This is not a difficult task because there is usually not a close call. In Mexico, it’s easy to discern government-protected unions. We can also use ILO guidelines to discern bona-fide unions. If collective bargaining contract doesn’t go beyond local law, it’s probably clear that it is isn’t a genuine contract.

**Athreya:** We’ve all been around the block in determining what freedom of association is. One thing that came out of last year’s conference at the University of Michigan is a 14 point list that is very clear. But there is question that Bjorn posed that’s also important: the tension between professionalism versus international solidarity.

**Participant for Himes:** Is this a feasibility study? What is FLO’s [Fairtrade Labeling Organization] decision making process?

**Himes:** FLO has a standards and policy group. All standards are approved or rejected by the board. This may not even get to the committee or the board because the recommendation is so basic.

**Participant:** Is there someone in this room who thinks American Apparel model is good? [No response]

**Participant:** How do we create unions in factories that are licensed? How would you deal with union battle in No Sweat?

**Rutter:** The idea is do provide space for organizing. Take away disincentives and provide incentives. The idea is not to force organizing. We might need an advisory committee to help make difficult decisions for close calls.

**Orth:** Global Exchange has a long history of working on fair trade, including a fair trade store. We’ve worked on getting large companies to buy fair trade. But there seems to be confusion that fair trade is only about trade and TransFair rather than a movement. Coming from a fair trade movement and being very involved in fair trade certification there are so many concerns with TransFair. In the fair trade certified coffee world 100% fair trade coffee companies are pulling out of TransFair. TransFair should work on fixing the problems and leave the sweatfree garments to the anti-sweatshop movement and organizations such as WRC and USAS. If TransFair wants to support sweatfree garments then TransFair should support the Designated Supplier program rather than trying to start something new.

Global Exchange helped start TransFair but because TransFair had to have that role between corporations and consumers, TransFair couldn’t support advocacy.

**Himes:** I have voiced mine and TransFair’s support for the Designated Supplier program. We have to work with companies and not just the purest companies but all sorts of companies. We can’t support advocacy groups not because of the
emphasis on corporate accountability, but because they bash our partners. In terms of the model to fair trade that is our approach. We have generated 70 million additional dollars to coffee farmers; we have supported unions especially with our banana certification.

**Marieke Eyskoot, Clean Clothes Campaign:** I’m on the outside so take this as a bit of an outside perspective. First on fair trade and labeling, even in Europe it’s a hard process that includes many questions especially with the launch of the fair trade cotton without much consultation with NGO’s. It was a shock since they are certifying the big companies. In some cases the communication was clearer from the big companies than from the fair trade organizations. I haven’t heard about the plans to research the garment making in Europe.

About the Designated Supplier program -- the CCC totally follows the rationale about sourcing policies being the missing link for the last 15 years. Its important to see this as being a fair trade model because you are buying from factories that are okay or you are sourcing from many places where you are trying to get the companies to stay in one place because it is good. So there are questions in terms of how is the Designated Supplier model is similar and different from the thinking behind fair trade certification. Furthermore, what is the role of the organization that is going to say the union is good and identify what a living wage is, especially if that organization is determining which factories will get Designated Supplier orders? It’s important that it comes from the workers and it’s important for us to create space for union organizing.

**Rutter:** We have answers to lots of these questions and I think it’s important to continue this dialogue.
**Marketing: the Fine Line between Activism and Entrepreneurialism**

*What is the role of activists in connecting sweatfree sellers with buyers? Should sweatfree activism include promoting ethical suppliers to individual consumers or institutions such as cities and states that have adopted a sweatfree procurement policy? If so, what should we know about marketing? What kind of marketing resources do we have? And can we pool our resources to convey a coherent, compelling message to individuals, institutions, and the media?*

- Bena Burda, Maggie's Organics / Clean Clothes Inc.
- Steven Brown, SweatFree Communities
- Sarah Church, Progressive Jewish Alliance
- John Flory, North Country Fair Trade
- Ruth Mena Garay, Fair Trade Zone, Nicaragua
- Kevin O’Brien, Ethical Sourcing Group

**Facilitator:** Mu Son Chi, Ethical Trade Action Group

**Notes:** Dick Meyer, South Sound Clean Clothes Campaign

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**Presentation Summaries**

**Kevin O'Brien, Ethical Sourcing Group:** Everyone is a marketer - a promoter and an advocate. The question then is where the sweatfree movement fits in. We live in a world bombarded by advertising - $260 billion is spent each year on advertising, which is three times the GDP of the non-U.S. members of the CAFTA trade agreement.

There are challengers in the marketplace such as "Adbusters" which changes the basis to messaging. But the marketing function is really about much more: research, merchandising, and promotion. There is especially a need to do research. For example, in the case of "Just Garments" in El Salvador there is much to do in regard to all those aspects of marketing in order to be successful.

**Sarah Church, Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA):** PJA is asking the Jewish community (largely around Los Angeles) to buy no 'schvitz' (sweatshop) goods for T-shirts and sweatshirts especially. PJA published a pamphlet about sweatshops focusing on the history of sweatshops with immigrant Jewish workers as well as the types of actions that can be taken now. They stress the importance of bringing faith-based communities into ethical actions as good allies. To enlist such allies you need to know your facts and then have materials ready to make people ethical consumers. For example, the term "kosher" is being expanded to include how workers are treated. Then if groups are to sign on to the idea there are cost issues. The items must be affordable.

**Bena Burda, Maggie's Organics:** Burda started the company in 1992
and has had all things sewn with the Nicaraguan Nueva Vida cooperative since 2001. The work of committed individuals has led to Maggie's success. In terms of marketing, they have no criteria in terms of who they sell to so that they can make their products accessible to everyone. They keep raising their margins especially because of a distribution system that is layered and also because of the margins that have to be added for advertising.

**Steve Brown, volunteering with Sweatfree Communities:** Brown pointed out the limits to undercapitalized marketing and advertising. There is a need for a consolidated sweatfree marketing association. The movement needs to engage in professional entrepreneurship and marketing. They therefore lag behind what other companies are doing and have capacity to do.

**Ruth Mena Garay, Fair Trade Zone, Nicaragua:** Mena Garay is a quality inspector at the Nueva Vida cooperative (the Fair Trade Zone). A free trade zone is defined by exemptions from certain taxes and regulations. The 60-member Nueva Vida cooperative has become the first worker-owned free trade zone in the world; they have declared themselves a fair trade zone because they operate a worker-empowered workplace. They pay $4.50 per day, five days a week. They provide insurance after three months when the worker's performance is evaluated to see he or she can be a cooperative owner. Other companies have no such benefits, pay workers $2 per day with strict quotas, may make those workers work seven days a week and 12-14 hours per day. The Fair Trade Zone makes both organic and non-organic clothing but sees more demand for the organic product. Their biggest clients are Maggie's and the Presbyterian Church. To expand they are now planning to spin their own thread and weave their own fabric. This is a result of a current problem of not having enough fabric for the demand. They would like to see fair trade certification of their clothing so people can feel assured of what they are buying.

**John Flory, North Country Fair Trade:** Flory says it is self-evident that marketing and activism go together. He advocates a broader view of marketing to see that consumerism has to be supportive of activism. He is supporting the start of a small factory in Piedras Negras (on the U.S.-Mexico border) to help displaced _maquila_ workers. They are starting small and making products on demand in order to create a market.
Worker Organizing Models and the Role of Solidarity

Worker organizing takes many forms and unionization in independent, democratic unions is often not possible. Sweatfree movement message and strategy should support the variety of forms of worker organizing. How do worker centers and worker committees function in California and China, for example? How are these models different from unions? How can solidarity actions and sweatfree campaigns help create the political space for various forms of worker organizing?

- Barbara Briggs, National Labor Committee
- Kimi Lee, Garment Worker Center (Los Angeles)
- Vivien Yau, Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (Hong Kong)

Facilitator: Alex T Tom, Chinese Progressive Association (San Francisco)

Notes: Katherine Stecher, Campaign for Labor Rights

Barbara Briggs, National Labor Committee

The National Labor Committee is U.S.-based organization that has worked with various organizations including established unions, women’s organizations, Jesuit groups, and human rights groups around the world. The National Labor Committee looks for trusting relationships with workers, generates and documents reliable information, and then makes the link to international solidarity.

U.S. solidarity can help open the space for transformation on the ground. Our role is not to help workers organize, because they can do that on their own. Our role is to help workers explore their windows of opportunity.

What we know more about is the solidarity end of things and the “what we can do here” end of thing. We aren’t organizing the workers on the ground, but we can help transform situations. We were in Honduras where a labor group brought us to a factory producing NBA shirts. Conditions were terrible. Workers were locked in; they worked 10-13 hours per day. If they were sick, they were docked for three days. There was screaming and harassment. They were paid $0.19 for a $75 shirt. When we talked to these workers and asked if they want to organize a union, they said no. Things are really bad, but we would be fired, it’s impossible. We kept on talking with them. We put out a report and got press. Conditions have changed tremendously now, as the U.S. companies went ballistic and local management decided to change.

So we can help document, supply information, track shipments, do basic math with pay stubs versus shirt sale cost, pass information, be a voice in the marketplace where it can frighten companies.

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**Vivien Yau, Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (Hong Kong)**

In China all unions are under the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), a yellow union that is part of the government and not trusted by workers. Consumer campaigns for worker rights have been going on for ten years, with more activity around Codes of Conduct recently. The typical violations, however, continue, including forced overtime and low wages.

Hong Kong activists are focusing on worker empowerment as the best way to improve the situation. Empowered, organized workers are the only legitimate monitors of employer practices. Workers are able to exercise their power through voting.

Hong Kong activists organize meetings, film screenings, and classes about worker rights. These venues provide an opportunity for workers to speak to others who are in the same situation and to get a sense of collectivity. But the worker centers are monitored by the government; sometimes these organizations are closed after a period of time - one of the many obstacles to organizing.

A new type of consumer campaign is needed. NGOs go into factories and organize worker committees, which are not unions, but can monitor working conditions and do labor rights trainings. International solidarity can support these workers committees.

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**Kimi Lee, Garment Worker Center (Los Angeles)**

Los Angeles has the largest garment industry in the United States — 100,000 workers, 4,500 factories each with 20-50 workers. The factory lifespan averages about one year. Unions have tried to organize these factories, as in the mid-1990s, but the brands simply left. Since then unions have focused on other garment industry services (e.g. laundry) that cannot be moved. But more and more attention has been paid to the sweatshop issue due to several high-profile cases.

The Garment Worker Center (GWC) started in 2000-2001 as a workers' community center that included classes on worker rights, health and safety as well as things like exercise classes and child care. The idea behind the worker center is not that it is an alternative to unions, but that it is a different model that can help to educate workers about what their rights are.

Los Angeles has two million undocumented workers. Many don't speak English and many have had bad
experiences with unions in their home country. Furthermore, the workers are often isolated because the factories encourage competition with their neighbors, which makes collectivity and organizing difficult.

But we try to build the understanding that a union is any collective organization to deal with employers. We educate workers on the idea of a union as a tool to allow them to negotiate a collective contract.

Garment workers in Los Angeles are making an average of $3.80 per hour, which is half of the state-wide minimum wage. A living wage is about $11 per hour in Los Angeles. Two-thirds of factories violate wage and hour laws; 75% violate health and safety standards. So more policy and codes of conduct won’t help. What we are focusing on is worker participation because they are the ones organizing in the factory. Workers should be the ones doing the monitoring.

List [passed out] of ways workers can monitor their own situation in factories (even when the union is in place) with the ultimate goal of better working conditions.

Discussion

Can we leverage local sweatfree laws be leveraged to support workers in Los Angeles?

**Lee:** The city doesn’t buy from these factories, so it often doesn’t pertain to these workers in particular. Other laws could be utilized, perhaps zoning. But the problem in Los Angeles is that the will to implement or enforce the laws doesn’t exist. The authorities often bust up the factories through raids, without following up, driving the factories further underground.

*How many workers utilize Garment Worker Center?*

**Lee:** 30-50 workers day-to-day, with 100-150 active workers

**Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE:** I find how little unions have done in Los Angeles embarrassing. But it seems like they’re some of the most difficult organizing circumstances in the United States. Can you envision any way to organize them, while they last?

**Lee:** What we’re trying to do is encourage the idea of association. It is young women’s fashion that needs a very quick turnaround time, so it will probably stay in Los Angeles indefinitely. Our idea is that if we build clusters (some buildings have many factories in them) of workers, that can really help. A lot of it is experimental.

*Is there possibility of pressuring those teen brands/retailers?*

**Lee:** GWC did the Forever 21 campaign that lasted 3 years, but even after supposed victory things haven’t changed - maybe because there was a lack of worker participation and investment in the monitoring and improvement process.
Is there much collaboration between GWC and SACOM?

Lee: Yes. GWC brought workers to Hong Kong, but couldn’t have those conversations in Mainland China. But, yes, without workers communicating with each other, there’s no empowerment.

Yau: In Hong Kong the situation is special because employers live in Hong Kong and activists can target them there, but aren’t allowed to have those exchanges within China.

Tom: We brought Chinese workers from San Francisco to Hong Kong. It was a revelation to workers from China that the same problems existed in the United States. We can build solidarity in this way, but it’s a more difficult process (and more dangerous) than some of the consumer activism.

Vicky Funari, Maquilapolis: With regard to Mexico, it’s important to both support the independent unions, but also the democratic process as a whole, since there is no opportunity for a full union/worker movement without that democracy. There is not going to be a strong independent union in Mexico until many other steps have taken place. There are so many levels of oppression that have to do with gender. Also there are other issues of domestic and workplace violence and questions of ethnic differences (i.e. indigenous populations). It’s complicated, but it seems important for the U.S. labor movement to offer solidarity in whatever form the Mexican workers need, even if it doesn’t result in formal unions for 20-30 years. There is not as much cross-border work as you’d think there would be at this time in history.

Kenneth Miller, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance: Twenty to thirty years is two or three more generations, regardless of where in the world we’re talking about. The problems they’re having start with the consumer market. The problems start here. We need to talk about how we’re going to transform the market that we’ve created. Twenty to thirty years is so long. What you’re saying is that it’s really hard and that we don’t know. There’s going to be a half dozen more wars, global dynamics will change. I think the change will happen when we recognize the power that we have. When we make a commitment to the people who sew our clothes and that those people have the same expectations in their lives that we have. I just wanted to say that.

Participant: The current movement towards ethical sourcing makes it hard to know whether a union or worker representative body is just public relations “media-washing” or a legitimate, democratic entity. What makes a worker committee a viable source? How do we trust the worker committee?

Briggs: Groups like the National Labor Committee rely on groups on the ground who know the historical and current contexts. You get a sense of
who is real and who is blowing hot air. This also takes time; over a period of exchanges you are able to better know who the players are and what the dynamics are. And it can also change over time. A basic question is: are the workers able to make decisions within the factories? Do they know their rights within that setting?

**Tom Lewandowski, Northeast Indiana Central Labor Council:** I think that what the three sisters were talking about is indeed the new labor movement. How we define unions has to change. We have to create cultures of solidarity, not just with a financial or economic base. We think about labor market organizing a lot. The nature of employment and markets has changed so much that we also need to examine our models for worker representation and power. We’ve thought of a couple of models. We had a chance to look at what the drywall people in San Diego did a few years ago; they focused on the industry, not the employers. In China, have you looked for any of the models from Eastern Europe for how you organize in face of a strong state-run union? Would you like to?

**Yau:** I would like to.

**Lewandowski:** We’ll make that happen. ... The worker center movement and the union movement have had tensions. But they should be supplementary, work together.
Union Solidarity and the 2006 All Star Game: An Opportunity to Move Major League Baseball?

Transnational apparel companies often weaken unions and lower standards for workers through outsourcing or merely threatening to shift production to low-wage regions of the world. Can solidarity between union and non-union workers counteract corporate power and result in better working conditions for all? Major League Baseball depends on a variety of union and non-union workers in the United States and around the world: there are U.S. union workers at companies that hold licenses to produce Major League Baseball apparel and non-union workers of the same companies and other companies who also produce baseball apparel; there are stadium workers, some of whom are unionized and others who are not; and there are the baseball players themselves and their association. And the public has a stake in their teams both as fans and as tax payers. Can we work together to improve the conditions of all workers associated with Major League Baseball? Is the 2006 All Star Game an opportunity to bring Major League Baseball to the bargaining table?

- Barbara Briggs, National Labor Committee
- Jane Howald, CWA Local 14177, Derby, New York, New Era Cap
- Tom Kertes, United Workers Association
- Kenneth Miller, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance

Facilitator: Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE
Notes: Natalia Rudiak, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance

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Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE

Union Solidarity is a current problem facing workers who want and need unions in apparel and other industries. Organizing these days is tough and nearly impossible for workers to do on their own. It’s a pessimistic conclusion, but they can’t do it on their own.

Workers need some strategic help. We all have workers within the same country, some unionized, some not. They can work together.

Three examples of international solidarity in organizing warehouse workers:
- An Indianapolis factory was operated by a French conglomerate. The workers and union reached out to unionized French workers of the same company. The union brought that campaign to Europe where the company could not handle the pressure. After 16 months they organized 800 workers at the warehouse with contracts.
• A H&M warehouse in New Jersey. It’s a powerhouse company. UNITE HERE reached out to unionized workers in Europe in Sweden. It worked.
• The Thai Labor Center – they knew of two factories where H&M workers were trying to unionize but the process bogged down. Swedish and New Jersey unions put joint pressure on the company so these warehouses eventually became unionized.

A diversity of tactics is necessary.

In baseball, Majestic and New Era have unionized and non-unionized workers. The Major League Players Association is unionized. Among stadium workers, some are organized, and some aren’t. The All Star Game – a seminal event, very much in the public eye – is a really great opportunity to come together.

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Kenneth Miller, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance

Working together isn’t happening that much in the United States. We need a global solidarity movement. Labor unions in this country are not doing international education for their members in how they have common interests. Workers at the bargaining table don’t take risks for workers in other countries. The theme is “Buy American” but this isn’t working for American workers. This is a marketing scheme. It’s a huge problem.

The promise was made to these workers that industrialization is something that’s good for you. The tools that we have that we have been working so hard to develop (licensing and procurement) are not good enough. We need to build up the education about them. We each need to be doing radical experiments to see how things work.

The Sweatfree Baseball campaign was designed as an experiment to go on top of the student campaign. Licensing campaigns – these team symbols belong to us, they tell us how to identify with our cities.

Winning with baseball would exponentially increase the number of licensing agreements that we control as a movement. What any one team does, the whole league will do. What one team does, other teams will line up quickly behind.

The Pirates came out to talk to us, even though Major League Baseball said, “don’t talk with them... this is a Major League problem, not a Pittsburgh problem.” This has happened three or four times now. We think we’ve set up a framework for local campaigns to talk with local teams and hold them accountable.

We are asking for help from the labor and student movement to maximize our success.

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A few years ago, the New Era Cap Company had been on strike for 11 months against a negative company that waged an anti-union campaign. The company owner hated unions. She said that the workers organized because they didn’t like the current union, not because they didn’t like working for the company. United Students Against Sweatshops, the Worker Rights Consortium, and the AFL-CIO came together to support us. Colleges threatened to drop contracts. Workers from Bangladesh protested with workers at New Era, joining us on the picket line. This was extremely powerful.

We were out for 11 months, and at the end we came away with a four year contract.

Later, when the company wanted to meet with me separately, I was worried. I even brought two union staff people with me. Well, it turns out they wanted to meet with me to open up early negotiations. We got a better wage package, and a projection of 150 additional members the following year. The overall change in the company from the strike to today is remarkable. New Era even won the “Champions at Work” award. The morale is up. It’s a great place to work. I would work there for another 20 years. Things are going good – we’re in a really good place with the company.

We were on strike for 11 months against a negative company that waged an anti-union campaign. Students supported us. Colleges threatened to drop contracts. Workers from Bangladesh walked the picket line with us. ... We came away with a four-year contract and higher wages. The morale is up. It's a great place to work.

Right after the strike, they lost a lot of business. They had to close a facility. It was between Derby and Buffalo; they closed Buffalo. They merged some of the workers, many were Vietnamese and Laotian. They were distrustful of the unions at first; now the Asians are 100% in the union. We even have two Vietnamese stewards.

Alabama is a New Era Cap non-union facility (it is a right-to-work state), but the workers there have benefited from the struggles in Derby. The Derby and Alabama factories have a great relationship.

People keep saying, “Organize Alabama,” but New Era treats them as well as Derby. Even though it’s non-union, it’s still a good shop to work for. Unions do need to shift the way they look at people that are union/non-union but working together for the same cause.
Barbara Briggs, National Labor Committee

We helped to take Bangladeshi workers to the picket line in Derby, New York. The Bangladeshi workers said that they were surprised by two things in the United States: that trees change from green to red, orange and yellow and ... that workers were able to walk on a picket line in the cold for 11 months! The workers took a lot back with them back to their home country, and they are still struggling to form their union. But we have solidarity.

Those highly visible campaigns can do a lot.

A group of workers in Honduras were physically locked in their factory, harassed, paid 60% of what they needed to live on. They made NFL, NBA, and baseball shirts. Basketball shirt workers were paid 19 cents to make the shirt, but the shirts were sold for 70 dollars in the store.

The Honduran workers didn’t want to organize a union; they were afraid of losing their jobs if they pressed for a union. The National Labor Committee worked with a strong labor federation in Honduras and investigated. Luckily, they sold stuff to Reebok too, and Reebok was going through a corporate transition and didn’t want bad press. There is a union in that shop now.

In 2004, the National Labor Committee made a comparable effort in Costa Rica – looked at a company making baseballs. Workers were developing repetitive stress disorders, couldn’t work anymore, and were fired. In Costa Rica there was no union to help those efforts. It was a rural area, not many other jobs available. There are some limited improvements in those factories, but the union has not moved in.

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Tom Kertes, United Workers Association

The United Worker Association (UWA) is a human rights organization; our goal is to be part of a movement to end poverty. We organize through a human rights framework.

People cleaning the stadiums at Camden Yard don’t have good working conditions, and they will say, “We have bad working conditions, why should we care about this [workers in other countries]?”

The UWA looks at this through a spiritual lens; just being a human being means you have a right to health care, and freedom from poverty.

In 2003 we organized the Summer of Exposure. We did leadership development with homeless individuals, low-wage individuals. UWA is literally run by low wage workers.

We started the campaign against Camden Yards, which is the largest employer of day laborers in Baltimore. When we started, workers were paid four dollars per hour because they were paid at a flat rate. UWA was
able to expose this quickly. The contractor, Aramark, was fired, and the wages raised to seven dollars per hour. Facilities management agreed to a code of conduct because they were vulnerable.

In 2004 we organized the Summer of Hope. Seven dollars an hour is still not a living wage. Peter Angelos is a famous labor “faker” in Baltimore. He took his money and said he’d pay the difference between seven dollars and a living wage. He broke his promise.

In 2005 we organized the Summer of Honor. We did our first major media event.

This year we will do the Summer of Justice. We will hopefully sign a contract for a 20-person co-op on Monday; this will be historic agreement.

UWA is planning to connect the Summer of Justice tour to Pittsburgh All Star Game protests.

Hopefully next year will be the Summer of Unity.

But Camden Yards, the facilities management, and the Orioles are trying a “divide and conquer” strategy. At first UWA did a lot work with African-American communities. Then the stadium purposefully switched to a Latino crew. But the universal human rights framework counter-acts that ‘divide and conquer’ strategy. We are building a poor people’s movement to end poverty. This movement is lead by poor people themselves.

I am going to introduce Carl, who is basically my boss to give a brief introduction of the leadership committee

Carl Johnson, member, UAW Leadership Committee:
We are a group of low wage workers. We vote on ideas to go on. And whatever the UWA needs to do to implement the idea goes out there, and people work on it. You said you wanted a brief introduction, so I’m giving you a brief introduction! (Laughter)

Discussion

Celeste Taylor, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance: I experienced a turning point when I met the Bangladeshi women in 2004. This workers tour was tied to a campaign sponsored by the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance. In 2004, Pennsylvania established a sweatfree executive order. Oppressed people have a special role and opportunity to contribute to this movement.

Kath Golub, UNITE HERE (CT): We cannot have solidarity until we have grassroots action. I decided to work with this union because I wanted to be a part of that grassroots solidarity. I am a researcher for hotels, not really apparel. Even the hotel union workers struggle on all different fronts just to find solidarity with workers in their own cities. This is the first step to global solidarity.
Bjorn Claeson, SweatFree Communities: Can we all unite to hold baseball accountable for human rights abuses in China, here, and in Bangladesh? Workers in this country might feel that they have something to lose by joining with international workers. How can we frame the unity?

Miller: I pass out baseball cards outside of the stadium and people say, “Why should I care about China if I don’t have the right to organize in the United States?” I don’t think the local fight makes sense outside of globalization. I don’t have any confidence in the labor movement that they are going to first focus here, and then focus on Bangladesh. For example, “We gotta do this first, and then we’re gonna focus on other countries.” Well, they’re not going to get what they want this year, or next year ... and we’re never going get to the point where we stand up with our other countries. We need an agenda to do both at the same time.

Bertran Begin, Canadian Labour Congress: International solidarity can work; but labor can’t do it on their own. We did solidarity work between Canada and Gildan workers in Honduras. You need to have the whole anti-sweatshop movement behind you. Canada has increased union membership in the decade, while the United States has declined. Education is the key, more than organizing.

It seems that if you do succeed with baseball, you open the door for hockey, basketball, etc. I think we should collaborate on our side of the border to follow up on what you guys are doing.

Participant: What is the strategy behind the All-Star game? Our resources are not infinite. What can different constituencies do and how can they contribute?

Kertes: My job with the UWA is communication. My background is in marketing and business administration. However this fits into an overall strategy. There will be a day where there can be attention drawn to their narrative. Hearing the narratives from Costa Rican baseball makers to cleaners in the stadiums is powerful. My timeline on everything is 20 years. Unlike Seattle, where issues were fragmented, we could use this to build a strong narrative.

Golub: What demand are we shaping here?

Miller: The demand is disclosure and locking the licensing agreements in place with factories. If the UWA is involved, we could put in the conditions about stadium workers. ... What would the Worker Rights Consortium do differently if they tripled the number of factories they have in their licensing decisions? We want access to the licensing agreements and codes of conduct. When we made the decision that we were going to go after Major League Sports, we went after it with the USAS framework.

Taylor: The Pirates are ready to talk. They want everything to be nice for the All-Star game. We can use the Olympic strategy.

Participant: What about using the press?
**Miller:** We have reached the limit on the mainstream press – the local team doesn’t really want to cover bad sports. Every scandal of sports shows up on the sports page. They love the steroid issue, but not the sweatshop issue. We know we are winning when sweatshop is on the Sports page.

**Participant:** What about using baseball players for the celebrity factor?

**Howald:** New Era didn’t get any help from the baseball players. (Kertes: Neither did UWA). New Era members wrote personal letters to the players, some of the kids wrote letters. We sent over 500 letters; none of them wrote back.

The players have a revenue sharing strategy between licensing agreements. This is integrated into their personal money package. It’s a millionaire’s club

**Participant:** What’s the scope of your conversation with the Pirates?

**Miller:** They key thing was the licensing agreements. They say their hands are tied because of Major League Baseball is national. But there is a lot of free stuff you get into the stadium. This is what gets tickets sold. The free stuff is all the team’s decision. They should set an example with all this free stuff. Anything that they do and say will be precedent setting.

What they could win at the All Star Game ... if they build it up in force and get the media involved ...is that the conversation will open up in the Major League Arena.

We can say, “We want you to lock the licensing agreements in place in factories and we want you to take worker’s testimony.”

**Participant:** Do they have a rudimentary code of conduct?

**Miller:** Yes. They claim they are ethical. The first step is full public disclosure. This can help us move quickly for independent monitoring.

**Begin:** I suggest talking with Canadian hockey gear workers; maybe they can give tips. I would be open to that type of campaign.

**Johnson:** I think we all need to remember that all great things go through a great deal of struggle. We’re all fighting the same thing – we’re not fighting just sweatshops, Peter Angelo, etc. We are all fighting poverty. We are all starting a foundation to fight for greater things.

**Kertes:** To follow up on that, two things would make this a victory for UWA: getting a story about sweatshops on the Sports page; showing Peter Angelos the connection between Baltimore and the bigger issue. If the goal is to set a precedent, and Pittsburgh is the weak link, we are giving them a precedent.

**Briggs:** It would be key for the Pirates to speak publicly that they support labor rights and ethics and respect the rights of all workers.

**Taylor:** There’s no recipe or policy that we are trying to pass. Please let me know what your committee’s unique contribution is. We need the diversity of contributions. We have an e-mail listserv.
Synthesizing the Weekend and Looking Ahead

Including reports from the strategy track and action plan groups, we will formulate plans and next steps.

Facilitators:
Andrew Kang Bartlett, Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Valerie Orth, Global Exchange

Notes: Sarah Church, Progressive Jewish Alliance

Representatives from strategy sessions asked to speak on challenges, lessons learned, ideas and action items


Athreya provided an overview of definitions of sweatfree over the last decade (codes of conduct, monitoring and certification initiatives... moving toward a model of solidarity, promoting production within factories that are empowered.) Chris Himes from TransFair reported on a research project on creating a fair trade label for garments. The project is in the initial stages of gathering information. Jessica Rutter from United Students Against Sweatshops explained the Designated Supplier Program, which builds on existing relationships with factories that have just working conditions, collective bargaining agreements, and democratic unions, and requires university licensees to funnel orders to such factories.

Mu Son Chi, Ethical Trade Action Group (Denver) – report on marketing session

As activists, we have a pretty narrow view of marketing (we equate it with advertising). It is much broader and includes product development, operations, and publicity/advertising. As activists, we should be involved in linking sweatfree producers to buyers. Some group members plan to come up with a proposal.

Katherine Stecher, Campaign for Labor Rights – report on “Models for Verification and Enforcement of Sweatfree Policies”

The FairWear Foundation (FWF) in the Netherlands and the Worker Rights Consortium based in Washington DC presented. FWF works with factories that produce workwear in Europe. Both models are important tools for real enforcement and for keeping people engaged in campaigns towards sweatfree purchasing. But these organizations cannot take the place of grassroots organizing. FWF is starting to expand (currently to Germany). We hope to watch their growth.
**Alex Tom, Chinese Progressive Association (San Francisco) – report on “Worker Organizing Models and the Role of Solidarity”**

There are sweatshops in our backyards. As we look around, not many people in the room are union members or factory workers themselves. It is important to bring workers to the table, or at least bring in those who work directly with workers in workers’ centers. These conferences and meetings are amazing spaces that we should open up to make them more effective and accountable.

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**Natalia Rudiak, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance – report on “Next Steps in City and State Collaboration on Enforcement and Procurement”**

San Francisco Mayor Newsom sent letters to 60 mayors encouraging a sweatfree procurement consortium for joint enforcement of sweatfree policies; Maine Governor Baldacci sent a similar letter to governors all over the country. How can this message be cohesive? We need research on common city and state suppliers and the dollar value of the contracts we’re dealing with. We need to connect this work to students’ campaigns at universities. There are ongoing organizing meetings about this. To be informed of the meetings, contact liana@sweatfree.org

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**Celeste Taylor, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance – report on “Union Solidarity and the 2006 All Star Game”**

Panelists and participants put their heads together to think about what really constitutes solidarity. As a movement we must address the capacity that purchasers have and not lose focus on improving conditions for workers. We have to present worker testimony from Haiti and Bangladesh, and connect workers all over the world. We won’t stop plant closings and we won’t improve conditions if we don’t make these connections between workers internationally. If we get baseball on board, if we talk about ‘fair play” and educate the public and the press, this will only help other sweatfree campaigns.

### Comments and questions

**Participant:** When can we expect the marketing proposal?

**John Flory, North Country Fair Trade:** We’re discussing a system like the plant in Costa Rica that has lost its owner, and the workers want to continue producing and find a market.

**Wade Crowfoot, Mayor’s Liaison to the Supervisors, San Francisco:** Increasing coordination and communication will be key to advance all of our campaign. We need to create a hub of communication.

**Tom Kertes, United Workers Association:** We clean up the trash after games at the stadium in
Baltimore. Thank you for the invitation to this conference. Now we see many parallels between our work and that of garment workers abroad.

We clean up the trash after games at the stadium in Baltimore. Thank you for the invitation to this conference. Now we see many parallels between our work and that of garment workers abroad.

Participant: We end up jumping from campaign to campaign, but we should really make sure we’re partnering with labor organizations abroad and in the United States to create ongoing maximization of resources and relationships.

Eric Odier-Fink, Justice Clothing: There are connections between workers in the United States and workers in the Global South who are building local sustainable economies. This could be its own conference; we only touched on it.

Andrew Blake: I work at Totino-Grace High School in Minnesota and brought students to the conference. Thank you for the exposure to the work you’re doing. Think of yourselves as teachers. You can do so much by educating a young person. We need to start earlier, educate 15-17 year olds. There’s so much language to catch up with that it takes a while to get the lingo down.

Alan Flum: I am starting from the beginning in thinking about sweatfree electronics.

Janet Essley: I am the artist who made the paintings on display at Resource Center. I want to allow us all to use the images. Viewers think about their clothing labels and discover all of the women’s stories that are living on their garments and in their closets. Please use the paintings. CDs with the images are available.

Carmen Durán, CITTAC, Tijuana: Thanks so much for having me. It is important to think about electronics manufacturing in addition to garment work. I work in Tijuana in that industry. I spoke in the workshop about assembling cell phones and televisions. In Tijuana, I go as a promotora – advocate – and talk to workers about the factory conditions. Thanks to all who made this possible. We will all continue to work for our dreams. This is especially important for those who don’t have the opportunity or capacity to organize. It was a challenge to attend, but I am glad I did.

Alex Tom, Chinese Progressive Association, San Francisco: Thank you to everyone for including the international representatives; we did a great job of being inclusive. We should all do a better job of including the voices of workers from China. We took a delegation to China to counter all the discussion of “all of our jobs going to China”. It’s not about being pro-China or anti-China. It’s about being involved strategically with the movement worldwide. There 10,000s of protests a year in China recognized by the government, and most likely

There are 85,000 protests a year in China recognized by the government, and most likely many times more that are not recorded. We have to think about how to include this organizing in our movement.
Gilberto García, Just Garments: I want to thank all of you and the organizers. We’re part of the movement that is giving workers hope all over the world. Especially important is to focus on the idea of political education, starting at the base. In some ways, we’re all connected. As part of promoting the idea of sweatfree, we need to see the connections to immigration and free trade agreements. We can integrate our movements. Across borders, we can find connections. All of our workers struggles are connected. We all need to work together for better conditions and salaries. Thank you!

Valerie Orth, Global Exchange: We are working on a seven-minute film about the San Francisco victory. We also have a great speaker, Chie Abad, who was a worker in a Saipan GAP factory and is available for speaking engagements. Please contact Global Exchange to find out more about the mayor’s letter on sweatfree procurement, to get a letter sent to your mayor, or to organize around this effort.

Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy: The workshop on open government only had three participants but discussion was fruitful. We discussed popular empowerment, including for poor people in whole cities. We focused on empowerment of people where 50,000 people turn out to decide the priorities of $200 million to be spent on public projects. People can form relationships with city officials and get involved in the process at every level. There are huge changes taking place, starting in Puerto Allegre, Brazil, and spreading. The Alliance for Democracy wants to bring this movement to the United States through open town meetings.

Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE: The quality of strategic discussion has been increasing since I have been involved in the labor community. But, we have a small number of actual victories to show for it. Our job is to build off this energy to keep focus and move forward. Over the last few years, we have been laying the groundwork. Now is when our work can really take off.
Appendix 1: Conference Program

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

6:00-7:00PM

Welcome by Resource Center of the Americas
Opening remarks by SweatFree Communities
Movement highlights and introductions.
Participants are welcome to share their campaign experiences and successes in a few words as we get to know each other.

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7:00-9:00PM

Public Event

Maquilapolis – City of Factories
A sneak preview of the soon-to-be-released documentary that tells the story of workers in Tijuana’s factories and explores the human costs of globalization. Post-screening discussion with producers and factory workers who participated in the film.

Carmen Durán, Centro de Información para Trabajadores y Trabajadoras (CITTAC) / Workers’ Information Center
Vicky Funari, Maquilapolis Producer/Director/Editor
Tere Loyola, Promotoras por los Derechos de las Mujeres

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SATURDAY, APRIL 8

9:00-10:30AM

Public Event

The Strategy of SweatFree Organizing

What is sweatfree organizing, who is involved, how do they work together, and makes it an effective strategy to end sweatshop exploitation? Hear from key participants how they see their role in the movement, and how we can sharpen the strategy to increase our power to make change.

Bjorn Claeson, SweatFree Communities
Wade Crowfoot, San Francisco Mayor's Liaison to the Board
Marieke Eyskoot, Clean Clothes Campaign International Secretariat
Gilberto Garcia, Centro de Estudios y Apoyo Laboral (Labor Studies and Support Center, El Salvador)
Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops
Lori Ryan, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace
Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium
Moderator: Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities
10:45AM-12PM : SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Sweatshop Economy and Sweatfree Organizing

A. How to Build a Campaign and Make Your City/County/State Sweatfree

This interactive workshop will give you what you need to start, run, and win a campaign for a sweatfree policy.

Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities
Valerie Orth, Global Exchange

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B. Sweatfree Legislation: A Tool to be Used

Examples of how to use sweatfree procurement policies to support worker struggles for better working conditions, while creating stronger grassroots organizations.

Sean Donahue, Peace through Interamerican Community Action
Yannick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye
Mike Howden, Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign
Sally Kim Cass, SUNY Albany, United Students Against Sweatshops

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C. Sweatfree Religious Institutions

Sarah Church, Progressive Jewish Alliance
Andrew Kang Bartlett, Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Sweatfree Schools

Student Power & Structure of the Global Garment Industry

Build connections with other students and set goals for the conference.

Learn about the structure of the global garment industry and how students have successfully harnessed their collective power to improve working conditions at university licensee contractors.

United Students Against Sweatshops

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Sweatfree Strategy

Worker Organizing Models and the Role of Solidarity

Worker organizing takes many forms and unionization in independent, democratic unions is often not possible. Sweatfree movement message and strategy should support the variety of forms of worker organizing. How do worker centers and worker committees function in California, how about in Bangladesh, Central America, and China? How are these models different from unions? How can solidarity actions and sweatfree campaigns help create the political space for various forms of worker organizing?

Barbara Briggs, National Labor Committee
Kimi Lee, Garment Worker Center (Los Angeles)
Vivien Yau, Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (Hong Kong)
Facilitator: Alex T Tom, Chinese Progressive Association (San Francisco)
1:15-2:30PM : SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Sweatshop Economy and Sweatfree Organizing

A. Nuts and Bolts of a Sweatfree Policy

How does a sweatfree procurement policy work? What is required of bidders and vendors? How is the policy enforced and who is responsible?

Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE
Kevin Thomas, Maquila Solidarity Network

B. Local and Organic Procurement: Garments and Food

As the sweatfree movement uses government procurement policies to improve working conditions globally, outsourcing of garment factory jobs continues to create an economic and social crisis within immigrant working class communities in the United States. At the same time, immigrant farm workers in the United States suffer from labor exploitation and pesticide poisoning while producing for big public purchasers. Find out how garment workers, farm workers, and advocates are using local and organic government procurement policies to support urban and rural working families and promote economic development. Recent ordinances in San Francisco and Woodbury County, Iowa, demonstrate the power of this strategy.

Alex T Tom, Chinese Progressive Association (San Francisco)
Matthew Tyler, Organic Consumer Association

C. Vertically Sweatfree: From Cotton to Fabric to Finished Garment

Looking at forced child laborers in Uzbekistan, empowered cotton workers in India, and the experience of the Fair Trade Zone in Nicaragua, we begin to make the case for a garment that is made sweatfree at all points of the supply chain: vertically integrated sweatfree!

Bama Athreya, International Labor Rights Fund
Mike Woodward, Fair Trade Zone

Sweatfree Schools

A. Make Your High School Sweatfree

An interactive workshop that will give you the tools you need to get your school to buy sweatfree.

Emma Roderick and Tommy Simon, United Students Against Sweatshops

B. Make Your Campus Sweatfree

Learn about United Students Against Sweatshops’ sweatfree campus campaign and how you can become part of it by organizing on your campus.

Miranda Nelson and Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops
Models for Verification and Enforcement of Sweatfree Policies

*How can U.S. schools, cities, and states use the Worker Rights Consortium to enforce sweatfree procurement policies? How can Dutch and other European cities use the Fair Wear Foundation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these models for verification and enforcement? How can they improve? And what is the role for activists in enforcing sweatfree procurement policies?*

Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium
Jantien Meijer, Fair Wear Foundation
Facilitator: Katherine Stecher, Campaign for Labor Rights

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2:45-4:00PM : SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Sweatshop Economy and Sweatfree Organizing

A. Sweatshop Labor in the United States: From Our Back Yard to Our Front Yard

*Low-income and immigrant workers and organizers share their experiences of the pressures of the global economy. How are workers organizing for justice in their communities? How can campaigns for sweatfree procurement support worker struggles in our own communities?*

Centro de Derechos Laborales / Immigrant Worker Center (Minneapolis)
Kimi Lee, Garment Worker Center (Los Angeles)

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B. Good Government for Worker Justice

*How can you create an open and transparent government that encourages a whole community to participate in policy-making and budgeting? How can you use such a government to advance the movement for worker justice?*

Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy
Celeste Taylor, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance

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C. There is Nothing Catholic about Exploitation - No Sweat Policy Successes in School Boards in Ontario

*In the province of Ontario, hundreds of thousands of Catholic high school students are required to wear school uniforms. This workshop will share the story of struggle and victory of No Sweat campaigns to get purchasing policies at the School Board level. This movement has grown from a few school boards to an Ontario wide initiative of 9 boards which is affiliating with the Workers Rights Consortium.*

Tony Muhitch, teacher, York Catholic District School Board
Ryan Nutter and Tahnee Pantig, students, Toronto Catholic District School Board
Lori Ryan, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace

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D. The Fair Food Movement

Over the past decade, there has been a growing movement for fair food around the globe, including everything from supporting local small farmers to national boycotts of companies like Taco Bell to the international fair trade coffee movement. This workshop provides an overview major components of the fair food movement as it exists today, and will challenge participants to explore ways to bring the movement to government procurement policies.

Erik Esse, Local Fair Trade Network
Brian Payne, Student / Farmworker Alliance
TJ Semanchin, Peace Coffee

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Sweatfree Strategy

A. What is Sweatfree?

A number of promising initiatives seek to end sweatshop exploitation by promoting sweatfree alternatives. The United Students Against Sweatshops has developed a Designated Supplier Program, requiring university licensees to source from factories that respect freedom of association and pay a living wage. A conference hosted by the University of Michigan last year explored the concept of “worker-voiced” products as common ground between the anti-sweatshop and fair trade movements. And TransFair USA has begun research into the possibilities and challenges of fair-trade certification for apparel. At the same time, a number of sweatfree campaigns are promoting sweatfree alternatives for their local communities based on a variety of “sweatfree” concepts. This session examines some of the key questions for these initiatives – for example, what is worker empowerment; what is fair purchasing; should companies be able to certify products as “fair trade” or “sweatfree” – in order to build a stronger unified sweatfree-fair trade movement.

Bama Athreya, International Labor Rights Fund
Chris Himes, TransFair USA
Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops
Facilitator: Dick Meyer, South Sound Clean Clothes Campaign

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B. Next Steps in City and State Collaboration on Enforcement and Procurement

Prompted by the sweatfree movement, the Mayor of San Francisco has called for a city consortium to consolidate procurement power and enforce sweatfree procurement policies. Similarly, the Governor of Maine is calling on other governors to join him in a Governors Coalition for Sweatfree Procurement and Worker Rights. These initiatives are great opportunities to expand and strengthen our movement. How do we organize to make sure cities and states sign on to these coalitions?

Liana Foxvog, SweatFree Communities
Valerie Orth, Global Exchange
Facilitator: Alejandra Domenzain, Sweatshop Watch

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4:30-6:00 PM: SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Sweatshop Economy and Sweatfree Organizing

A. Resistance In China
This workshop will look at forms of worker resistance within China, including the formation of worker committees and centers. A discussion will follow on the role of international solidarity in supporting worker struggles.

Vivien Yau, Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (Hong Kong)

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B. How to get Media Attention to Your Campaign
Learn nuts and bolts about working with the media: how to write a press release, what stories to pitch, when to aim for media coverage, and more.

Mary Turck, Resource Center of the Americas

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C. Teachers’ Union: Powerful Sweatfree Ally
The NYS Labor-Religion Coalition’s work with the New York State United Teachers union can serve as a model for other campaigns seeking to work in partnership with organized labor. Workshop participants will come away with ideas and strategies for engaging unions, with their tremendous resources, in sweatfree work.

Brian O'Shaughnessy, New York State Labor-Religion Coalition

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Sweatfree Schools

Strategic Organizing for Students
Jessica Rutter, United Students Against Sweatshops

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Skill building small groups:
a. facilitation
b. coalition building

United Students Against Sweatshops

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Sweatfree Strategy

Union Solidarity and the 2006 All Star Game: An Opportunity to Move Major League Baseball?

Transnational apparel companies often weaken unions and lower standards for workers through outsourcing or merely threatening to shift production to low-wage regions of the world. Can solidarity between union and non-union workers counteract corporate power and result in better working conditions for all? Major League Baseball depends on a variety of union and non-union workers in the United States and around the world: there are U.S. union workers at companies that hold licenses to produce Major League Baseball apparel and non-union workers of the same companies and other companies who also produce baseball apparel; there are stadium workers, some of whom are unionized and others who are not; and there are the baseball players themselves and their association. And the public has a stake in their teams both as fans and as tax payers. Can we work together to improve the conditions of all workers associated with Major League Baseball? Is the 2006 All Star Game an opportunity to bring Major League Baseball to the bargaining table?

Barbara Briggs, National Labor Committee
Jane Howald, CWA Local 14177, Derby, New York, New Era Cap
Tom Kertes, United Workers Association
Molly McGrath, AFL-CIO Solidarity Center
Kenneth Miller, Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance
Facilitator: Eric Dirnbach, UNITE HERE

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Marketing: the Fine Line between Activism and Entrepreneurialism

What is the role of activists in connecting sweatfree sellers with buyers? Should sweatfree activism include promoting ethical suppliers to individual consumers or institutions such as cities and states that have adopted a sweatfree procurement policy? If so, what should we know about marketing? What kind of marketing resources do we have? And can we pool our resources to convey a coherent, compelling message to individuals, institutions, and the media?

We recommend that participants in this session also attend “What is sweatfree?” Saturday, 2:45-4:00 pm.

Bena Burda, Maggie’s Organics / Clean Clothes Inc.
Steven Brown
Sarah Church, Progressive Jewish Alliance
John Flory, North Country Fair Trade
Ruth Mena Garay, Fair Trade Zone, Nicaragua
Kevin O’Brien, Ethical Sourcing Group
Facilitator: Mu Son Chi, Ethical Trade Action Group

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6:30-8:30PM : SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Public Event

Fiesta for Worker Solidarity

Fundraiser for Resource Center of the Americas and SweatFree Communities
Donation $15-60 includes Mexican dinner buffet and music by Quilombolas - Afrocentric world music with politically conscious lyrics in Portuguese, French, Spanish, and English.

Featured speakers:
Yannick Etienne, Batay Ouvriye, Haiti
Kimi Lee, Garment Worker Center, Los Angeles
9-10:30AM : SUNDAY, APRIL 9

Sweatshop Economy and Sweatfree Organizing

A. Organizing in the Age of CAFTA and the WTO

How do these trade agreements affect sweatfree policies? What campaign efforts can we join to stop harmful trade agreements?

Larry Weiss, Citizens Trade Campaign

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B. Union Organizing in Colombia and the Coke Campaign

Gerardo Cajamarca, SINALTRAINAL Human Rights Committee (Colombia) & United Steelworkers
Cretin-Derham Hall Concerned Students Against Coca-Cola
Tommy Simon, United Students Against Sweatshops
Trina Tocco, International Labor Rights Fund

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C. Activism that Wins! Story Telling and Strategies for Change

How can we communicate our vision of a future without sweatshops? How can we re-frame the debates around sweatshops and globalization? How can we amplify the voices of communities struggling for economic justice and human rights? This workshop will discuss how to apply “narrative power analysis” tools to social change work. That is, looking at the stories that are told, who tells them, and how we can change the story for a more just future. Participants will learn strategic messaging and organizing tools to apply to the design of winning campaigns.

Maryrose Dolezal and Matthew Schmucker, Strategy Training and Organizing Resources for Youth (STORY)
Patrick Reinsborough, smartMeme Strategy & Training Project

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D. A Day in the Life of an Independent Monitor

Are you still confused about what monitoring means? What does monitoring look like on the ground? This workshop will give you a behind-the-scenes look at the Worker Rights Consortium.

Jeremy Blasi, Worker Rights Consortium

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E. Your Time to Network and Make Action Plans

Was something missing? Did you want to spend more time on a topic? Invite a meeting during this time on a topic of your choice.

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10:45AM-12PM : SUNDAY, APRIL 9

All together

Synthesizing the Weekend and Looking Ahead

Including reports from the strategy track and action plan groups, we will formulate plans and next steps.
Appendix 2: Conference Sponsors

- A Different Approach, Shreveport, Louisiana
- AFL-CIO
- AFSCME, Local 2459, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- The Arca Foundation
- Argusfest, Denver, Colorado
- Café Rebelión, Denver, Colorado
- Campaign for Labor Rights
- Clean Clothes Campaign of Southern Maine
- Cretim-Derham Hall, St. Paul, Minnesota
- CWA Local 14177 Derby New Era Cap Workers
- Donnelly/Colt Progressive Resources Catalog
- Eastern Maine Central Labor Council
- Ethical Trade Action Group, Denver, Colorado
- Global Exchange
- Handcrafting Justice, Jamaica, New York
- IBEW Local 1837, Maine and New Hampshire
- Jewish Labor Committee
- Justice Clothing, Bangor, Maine
- Lifewear, Pottstown, Pennsylvania
- Longfellow Community Council, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Maggie’s Organics/Clean Clothes Inc., Ypsilanti, Michigan
- Maine AFL-CIO
- Manny’s Tortas, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council, AFL-CIO
- New Jersey Headwear, Hoboken, New Jersey
- New York State United Teachers
- North Country Fair Trade, St. Paul, Minnesota
- Northeast Indiana Central Labor Council
- No Sweat Apparel, Boston, Massachusetts
- No Sweat Store, Cleveland, Ohio
- Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance (PASCA)
- The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, the Connectional Ministries Work Group
- Peace through Interamerican Community Action (PICA), Bangor, Maine
- Platinum Sportswear, Norcross, Georgia
- Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Progressive Jewish Alliance, California
- Rainstorm Inc., Orono, Maine
- Resource Center of the Americas, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Scotty’s Fashions, Pen Argyl, Pennsylvania
- SEIU Connecticut State Council
- SEIU Local 284, South St. Paul, Minnesota
- SEIU Local 1989, Maine State Employees Association
- Traditions Fair Trade, Olympia, Washington
- Union House, Wyoming, Minnesota
- United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries, Women’s Division
- United Students Against Sweatshops
- UNITE HERE
- UNITE HERE, New England Regional Joint Board
- United University Professions, New York
- Western Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
- Workers’ Project, Fort Wayne, Indiana