

APPAREL: LINKS IN THE CHAIN WORKSHOP

I. AIMS:

- < Help participants understand the supply chain linking factory garment workers to consumers in North America.
- < Assist in raising awareness of the distribution of power and control within different levels of the garment industry.
- < Engage participants in discussions geared to demonstrate the disparity of different “benefactors,” AKA who wins and who loses in this trade chain.
- < Introduce ideas and best practices for empathic and responsible consumerism.

II. WHAT YOU NEED:

- < About 1 hour;
- < Example of a complicated item of clothing (button down shirt, jacket);
- < Photocopy of “Role Cards” sheets (laminated if feasible);
- < Copy of both the grid below and the grid on page 3 - drawn on a large sheet of paper, chalkboard, or whiteboard.

Garment Chain	Initial Price	Negotiated Price
Garment Worker		
Factory		
Brand/Importer		
Retailers		
Total:		

III. WHAT TO DO:

30 MIN.

Introduce the Workshop:

- < The Workshop links faith with consumer choice. We live in a time of intense globalization, and as such, it is extremely important to offer tools that aide cognizant shopping habits. We will spend time considering how our purchasing choices impact communities all over the world; communities whose needs involve clean water and access to food. What can we offer that can make a difference? Exploring something as simple as the clothes we choose to wear become an occasion for learning an act that can affect economic justice, environmental sustainability and poverty eradication will be one focus of our time together. Becoming an informed shopper and its impact on the lives of our brothers and sisters living all over the world will be a thought we will have as we leave the workshop.

The Workshop:

1. Take your item of clothing and have entire group guess its price. Tell the group, for today let’s agree this item costs \$50.

Best practice:

- *Choose an item that would sell retail for \$50, it will assist the workshop stay on topic without mixing the message with complex math problems.*
 - *Choose an item with added detail or complexity (buttons, zippers, collars, waste bands, etc) as this will be a better visual for the labor intensity involved in crafting an article of clothing.*
2. Divide your audience into **4 groups**. Explain that each group will be representing a character in the supply chain of the apparel industry. Give each group their corresponding role card.

Best practice:

- *If the group is larger than 100 people the facilitator can easily split the group into 8 groups doubling up roles and allowing each group to have separate conversations. For instance, two groups of Garment Workers, two groups of Factory Owners, etc.*
3. Ask one person from each group to read **their role card aloud** to their group. Then give each group some time to think and brain storm about their role.

Best practice:

- *Occasionally groups will need assistance in beginning this conversation, so familiarize yourself with each role card before the session and think of ways you can instigate a dialogue. Think about each roles conceptual standard of living, wage expectations and responsibilities. Ideally the role card will quickly become a starting point that leads to the creation of a more complex character. Engaging the participants early on will assist you greatly as the exercise develops.*
4. Based on the character presented on their role card, ask each group to think about how much they **should** get of every dollar that the item costs (this is an easier way to think about percentages). Ask the groups to discuss among themselves how much they should get based on the work they do, their expenses, etc. Give them about 10 minutes to come up with an agreed number and argument. Remind them it is not what they think really happens, but instead what they want and/or deserve.
5. Ask each group to report how much they think they should receive and record it on the grid under "**Initial Price.**"

Best practice:

- *Have each group choose one person to represent each role and present both who they are and how much they deserve. If you introduce these presentations as if it is taking place at a “board meeting” it will allow the participants to get into character. Encourage the audience to engage by assisting the speaker if points are being left out.*
6. **Add up the amounts.** They probably add up to much more than the item cost. Ask each group why they feel they should receive the amount they proposed. Is there any group that seems to be getting too much - too little? Now ask the group representatives to return to their groups and asks that each group renegotiate its number with the other groups so that the total is the amount paid for the article of clothing (ideally \$50). Encourage the players to engage - respectfully - with each other.
 7. When an agreement is reached, record each negotiated amount under the “Negotiated Price” column.
 8. Once the Negotiated Price is recorded, have the participants step out of their roles and brain storm and record what they assume the real breakdown of the item might be.
 9. Finally, write in the prices in the last column as shown below. Emphasize that these are general proportions but give a good sense of how money is distributed along the chain.

Best practice:

- *When asked about assembly lines, agree that is the norm, but for today’s role play we assume one garment worker makes one item.*

Conventional Garment Chain	Assumed Breakdown	Conventional Breakdown
Garment Worker		\$2
Factory		\$8
Brand		\$15
Retailers		\$25
Total:		\$50

10. While the participants are still in their small groups, ask each group:
 - What happened from your perspective?
 - Is there anything you can think of to improve this situation for garment workers?

IV. GROUP DISCUSSION:

10 MIN.

Once the group is back in their seats, ask them to talk informally about the game that they just played. Ask them some questions:

- < Were you surprised by the figures from the conventional trade?
- < Who has the best working conditions?
- < Who benefits most from this model? Do consumers?
- < Who has the greatest power? Where does this power come from?
- < Was the distribution of the price fair? How could it be made more fair?
- < Would you be prepared to pay more for clothes, or other products, if you knew that workers received a price that would enable them to meet their basic needs?

Points to Raise:

- < How do we ensure that more of the dollar reaches the people who make our clothes?
- < Do we simply eliminate links in the chain or replace them with cooperative businesses owned and democratically governed by the workers themselves?
- < Point out again that these are general numbers to give a sense of the garment industry. For example, when the market price is low, the balance actually tips farther toward the workers in a sweat free system because of the guaranteed minimum price.
- < The brand/importer has many stores while the retail store is dependent on each sale.

V. GETTING INVOLVED:

Brainstorm on ways that you can be involved.

1. REDUCE AND REUSE - Do you need all the clothes in your closet? Can you purchase secondhand clothing?
2. BUY SWEAT FREE
3. DISCUSS TRADE ISSUES
4. PURCHASE UNION MADE CLOTHING - guaranteed wage - outside the U.S. it's usually the Unite label
5. ASK THE STORE ABOUT THEIR SUPPLY CHAIN

VI. GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK:

Let us know if you have ideas that we can share with other groups or ways that we can make this workshop and project work better for you. Please send your comments to:

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VII. RESOURCES:

1. Campaign for Labor Rights - www.clrlabor.org
2. Co-op America - www.coopamerica.org
3. National Labor Committee - www.nlcnet.org

4. Rugmark Foundation - www.rugmark.org
5. El Salvador Wage Study - www.crea-inc.org
6. Behind the Label - www.behindthelabel.org
7. Sweatshop Watch - www.sweatshopwatch.org