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Greener Day 23

This video was very inspiring. Often in our society, we forget that there are actually people behind every piece of clothing that we wear. The video gave light to one of hundreds of millions to billions of factory workers in the world. It is only fair and just for the employees to be paid a decent wage and to have good working conditions. I was excited to see what great strides Patagonia is making in justice for workers. Being a Fair Trade company comes with innumerable benefits. Drawing on what I learned in the Fair Trade challenge, Fair Trade products are made in safe and healthy working conditions where workers receive a fair price and have a voice in how their workplace is run, both of which can be seen in the video. Fair Trade is also better for the environment; they support sustainable practices that minimize our environmental footprint.

So, for today, I wore one of my favorite hoodies inside out to provoke interesting conversations throughout the day about fast fashion, working conditions, and reasons to support Fair Trade. I chose a green hoodie from H&M (DIVIDED brand). I tried to make it as noticeable as possible that I was doing *something* different on purpose, and I thought that an inside out zip up hoodie may stand out more than an inside out t shirt. First, however, I looked into what the product went through to be made. According to the label on the product, the hoodie is made from 55% cotton and 45% polyester and the hood is made from 52% polyester and 48% cotton and it was produced in Bangladesh.

In order to have a better understanding of not only how the product was made, but what the two sides of the story are, I looked into what H&M says about their working conditions. Often, a brand will sugar-coat the facts to make themselves look better than they actually are. Much like stated in the video from the beginning of the challenge, H&M say that they are helping people in developing countries by giving them jobs, and thereby money. However, they do not go into detail of the working conditions in these factories. I found it interesting that they stated at the top of their page on working conditions the following: “The H&M group doesn't own any factories — our products are made by independent suppliers, often in developing countries. It would be impossible for us to operate if we did not take responsibility for the people working for our suppliers. Everyone should be treated with respect and the suppliers should offer their workers fair wages and good working conditions” (H&M.com). Now, to break this down based on how I see it, they are almost giving an excuse for not being responsible for working conditions by stressing the fact that they do not own any of the factories. We must take into consideration that they do mention that they take responsibility for the people, but they do not say that they are responsible for the working conditions. Now the last sentence is clever how

they used it. At first glance, it seems as though they are saying that their workers are paid fair wages and have good working conditions; however, if we read the sentence taking into consideration the wording, they are only saying that workers *should* have these benefits, not that they do or that the suppliers provide them with any of it.

Now, we look at what really happens in H&M factories. The impact that the item has on the people who produced it is similar to many typical conditions in sweatshops around the world. Since 2010, almost 8,000 Cambodian workers have reportedly collapsed while making products for H&M. This was due to “malnutrition, excessive heat, long hours and stiff targets” (thesun.co). The effects on the environment are equally as prevalent and can be seen through problems such as air pollution, chemical waste, and health hazards to workers linked to bad ventilation in numerous sweatshops around the globe, including buildings that H&M uses.

Now, I started my day of wearing my hoodie inside out (the challenges become available to me when I am already at school, as I am on EST and not PST, so I put the inside out hoodie on as soon as I got home and wore it for the rest of the day). Many people were excited to learn about PGC and the challenges that I have completed this month. I was asked many times why I chose this specific hoodie and I told everyone that before today, I was unaware that so many mainstream products are produced in sweatshops and how I was going to change my lifestyle from now on to reduce the issue and advocate for fair wages and justice for all of the workers who cannot work anywhere else. I convinced many people to become more aware of what they were buying and where it was coming from before purchasing an item.

