

# Labor/Community ALLIANCE

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## DEMONSTRATION AT THE GAP ROCKS FASHION FAIR

On March 29 over 100 demonstrators filled the main entrance at the Fresno Fashion Fair mall protesting The Gap's use of sweatshop labor. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the newly formed United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) at CSUF were the demonstrations main organizers. This was the biggest demonstration so far at The Gap in Fresno. Medea Benjamin, director of Global Exchange and one of the organizers of the nationwide campaign against The Gap, attended the demonstration and told the crowd how important it is to keep the pressure up.

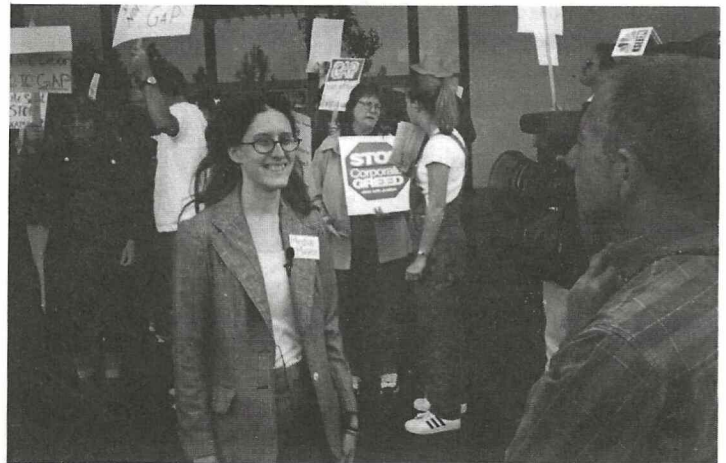
The demonstration, which was bigger than many people had expected, made Fashion Fair security extremely nervous. Security guards threatened to arrest protestors on several occasions but had to back down when they could not convince Fresno Police to help them. Protestors entered Fashion Fair for a brief march and handed out fliers in front of The Gap.

### MONTHLY DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED

The USAS is calling for monthly demonstrations at The Gap in Fashion Fair. The next demonstration will be May 6 at Noon. Several community groups have received a letter from Fashion Fair's attorney threatening participants with arrest if they continue to protest The Gap at Fashion Fair. The letter, which is intended to intimidate protest supporters, is having the opposite effect. Most organizers expect the May 6 demonstration to be bigger than the last one and nobody wants to let Fashion Fair security stop them from handing out fliers.

The Labor/Community Alliance believes that there are fundamental principles that guarantee the community a right to protest and/or discuss issues in a public forum. The mall is about as close as you come in Fresno to a town square and citizens must have a right to express their opinions if the First Amendment is to have any meaning.

The organizers of the May 6 event will be planning the strategy and tactics of the next demonstration which will include a way for everyone to participate, whether or not they are willing to risk arrest. The important thing is to come out and show that this community is not frightened by Fashion Fairs threats and that we will let people know about The Gap's use of sweatshop labor.



CSUF student and United Students Against Sweatshops member Leah Haymond is interviewed at The Gap demonstration in front of Fashion Fair.

Photo by: Mike Rhodes

### WHY FOCUS ON THE GAP?

Gap, like Nike, is an industry leader. Owning not only Gap but Banana Republic and Old Navy, it has become one of the most profitable and fastest-growing clothing retailers in the world. In 1998 Gap had sales of over \$9 billion, net profits of \$825 million and has an extraordinary projected growth rate over the next three years of 33%. Gap CEO Millard Drexler made \$47 million and Gap

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## MAY DAY 2000

**Amnesty for undocumented workers!  
International call for Action!  
Celebrate the original workers holiday!**

**April 30, 2000 @10:00 a.m.  
Chestnut and Cesár Chavéz Blvd.  
(Kings Canyon Road)  
Fresno, California**

March to the federal building, where food, music, speakers will present unity, spirit and the passionate call for more worker protection and security!

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Chairman Donald Fisher is worth \$8 billion.

In 1995 Gap was the target of an anti-sweatshop campaign spearheaded by the National Labor Committee because of union-busting in the Mandarin factory in El Salvador. After successful grassroots mobilization, Gap agreed to a monitoring system at that factory that continues to this day. While Gap received good publicity for this move, it failed to implement all the reforms; it put minimal resources into the monitoring system and reneged on its pledge to extend such monitoring to other factories in the region.

Furthermore, in three years of discussions with anti-sweatshop groups, Gap has refused to take a serious look at the wage question. In a meeting with the company, we convinced Gap to agree to the statement that no worker making products for Gap should live in poverty, but Gap still refused to take the next step and accept responsibility for ensuring that workers are paid the necessary living wage.

In Saipan, a US territory replete with sweatshops, Gap does the most business of any company on the island—over \$200 million a year, contracting in six factories. Whereas these companies import without tariff or quota restrictions and label their clothes 'Made in the USA,' they do not adhere to US labor laws. Workers and the anti-sweatshop groups UNITE, Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch and the Asian Law Caucus filed a billion dollar lawsuit against Gap and 17 other retailers for labor abuses in Saipan.

The sweatshop problem undoubtedly extends beyond Saipan. In Russia we were notified that Gap pays factory workers just 11 cents/hour and keeps them in slave-like conditions. Workers from Macao contacted the Asia Monitor Resource Center in Hong Kong complaining of abusive treatment by factory managers, who forced them to work excessive overtime and cheated them out of their pay. A delegation from the National Labor Committee in June 1999 reported that Honduran Gap factory workers are subjected to forced pregnancy tests, forced overtime, exceedingly high production goals, locked bathrooms, and wages of \$4/day, which only meet 1/3 of their basic needs. The workers said that if they tried to organize a union or even become more informed of their rights, they would be fired. They had never heard of Gap's code of conduct. In Indonesia, 700 workers went on strike in July, 1997 protesting miserable wages and the factory management's refusal to recognize their independent union.

As with other major apparel retailers, Gap must be pressured to pay workers a living wage, ensure their right to organize, disclose factory locations and allow independent monitoring.

For more information about the May 6 demonstration at The Gap contact USAS at 278-2891 or email <rgb12@csufresno.edu>.



Former Gap sweatshop worker Chie Abad (far left), joins protestors at March 29<sup>th</sup> demonstration in Fresno.

Photo by: Mike Rhodes

## LOCAL ACTIVISTS PUSH AMNESTY PLAN

On April 10 activists from several unions and immigrants attended a training on immigration policies conducted by Northern California Immigrant Rights attorney Mark Silverman. These activists are boning up on laws effecting immigrant workers as they prepare to address local groups in support of the AFL-CIO new policy calling for general amnesty for immigrant workers.

The group which is the Immigrants Rights Project of the Labor/Community Alliance plans to make presentations to local unions, community groups and churches about the need to protect immigrant workers' rights as a first step in the effort to help them unionize and improve wages and working conditions for all workers in the San Joaquin valley.

This project coincides with the historic shift in the AFL-CIO position away from employer sanctions and in support of a general amnesty.

AFL-CIO executive vice president Linda Chavez-Thompson will tour the country to meet with immigrant workers, union organizers, and community organizers. The Western Regional forum will take place on June 10 in Los Angeles. For information, call (213) 387-1974.

The San Joaquin valley with hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers, low wages, and high poverty levels, is an important organizing arena. The group hopes to win support from at least 20 local labor, community and religious groups for the amnesty proposal. After this, local politicians will be approached to join the effort.

If you are interested in helping out with this project or your organization would like to schedule a speaker call Pam Whalen at 226-0477 or Gloria Hernandez at 268-2261.

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