

Justice for Forever 21 Garment Workers

Forever 21 makes millions of dollars a year off the backs of Los Angeles garment workers who don't even receive the minimum wage

Nineteen garment workers have joined together to launch a public campaign against **Forever 21**, a popular retailer of young women's clothing. They sewed the Forever 21 label in six different sweatshops in downtown Los Angeles under deplorable conditions. Forever 21, also called Fashion 21 and Forever XXI, is a multi-million dollar company based in Los Angeles, with now over 150 stores around the country and forty of those in California. An estimated 95% of its production is done in the U.S with a majority of that in Los Angeles. **Do Won Chang** is the company's president and co-founder with his wife **Jin Sook Chang**.

"We worked ten to twelve hours a day for subminimum wages and no overtime," says **Esperanza Hernandez**, one of the garment workers. "A lot of our factories were dirty and unsafe, with rats and cockroaches running around."

The workers joined together to ask Forever 21 to pay their owed wages and to ensure that all the factories it uses abide by labor laws and respect the workers. The company has so far refused. The workers have launched a public campaign and a national boycott with the help of the Garment Worker Center to educate the public about sweatshops and ask for support in winning justice from Forever 21. In September 2001 the workers filed a lawsuit with the help of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. The lawsuit continues in the courts. Since then, more workers who sew Forever 21 clothes have come forward since then to denounce sweatshop conditions in their factories.



"Workers who sewed Forever 21 started to come to us in March, 2001. By June we had 19 workers from six different factories," says Joann Lo, organizer from the Garment Worker Center. "We realized that using sweatshops is standard business practice for Forever 21."

"Eight years ago I was a worker in the El Monte slaveshop case. I worked in the front shop in Los Angeles where we finished the clothes sewed in El Monte," says **Araceli Castro**. "Unfortunately the abuses continue, and I am involved in this campaign to continue fighting so that the abuses stop and companies like Forever 21 accept their responsibility for the conditions in the factories."

The Garment Worker Center (GWC) is an independent, non-profit, community-based organization whose mission is to empower garment workers in the Greater Los Angeles area to work collectively for an end to sweatshop abuses in the industry.

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