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Writing Sample 2: Informative speech on the problem of sweatshops

Look at the tags/labels attached to the clothing in your closet or dresser. Have you found anything different about the producers? Yes! We can find that our clothes are mostly produced in several developing countries instead of America itself, such as China, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Actually, they often are made in sweatshops, workplaces that do not observe the basic standards modern societies expect in their places of work.

Although sweatshops run by multinational corporations have existed for many years, in recent years they have begun to attract the attention of the media and the public. On September 15, 2009, an employee who worked for Nike for about 6 years handed several pages about sweatshops to a journalist at the “Daily Economic News.” He also told the journalist the true story behind Nike’s sweatshops.

Whether or not this is something you had noticed, in light of recent incidents, now seems like a good time to take a hard look at the existence of sweatshops. As an international student from China, I have seen first-hand the impact of sweatshops on people. The existence of sweatshops deepens poverty and causes horror for workers in developing countries.

I want to use one specific multinational enterprise: Nike. A very well-known shoe and athletic wear company that controls many sweatshops in developing countries, Nike uses child labor, forced labor, and excessive working hours. From its history to its current ownership of large numbers of sweatshops in developing countries, Nike serves as a great example of sweatshops’ oppression of workers. By reviewing the evidence against Nike’s sweatshops, I hope to illustrate the gravity of this issue so that we, as the public, might move towards recognizing

that sweatshops are nothing new. Historically, they were the rule in many parts of the world, but they do not have to continue to violate workers' basic rights.

According to the Random House Dictionary Reference, a sweatshop is "a shop or factory in which employees work long hours at low wages under poor conditions." Too many humans are forced to work for too little money in unsanitary and insecure working conditions in China, Indonesia, and other Asian countries. The Third World Traveler's website documents that Indonesian sweatshop workers make \$2.46 a day, Vietnamese workers make \$1.60 a day, and Chinese workers make \$1.75 a day. Third-party agencies investigated sweatshops in Asia and found that more than a quarter of factories had vocal and physical abuse of workers. For instance, up to 50% of the factories in the region restrict access to toilets and drinking water during the workday, and factory workers do not have holidays.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Nike sweatshops emerged in Southeast Asia and China. As time went on, Nike sweatshops spread all over the Asian countries. All employers want to reduce their operating expenses, particularly their cost of labor. In a global economy, employers can search the world for workplaces that pay their workers the lowest wages. This has the effect of placing poor countries, where low wages and inferior working conditions already exist, in competition with other low-wage countries. Nike lists 124 plants in China, 73 in Thailand, 35 in South Korea, and 34 in Vietnam and others in Asia. Nike has been sued repeatedly for its Asian sweatshop conditions. Now, even though Nike has claimed that they will take action to stop sweatshops, their sweatshops still spread over Asia. The phenomena I've described aren't going to go away by themselves, and they cost both society and us.

First of all, economic impacts include lost productivity and increased health-care costs. Sweatshops control people's working time, and poor working conditions lower productivity of

the workers. This directly inhibits the development of the economy all over the world. Also, if workers work a long time, such as up to 20 hours a day, they have a higher possibility of having bad health. This contributes to increased health-care costs.

In addition to economic costs, sweatshops have human rights impacts. First, they limit individual achievement. Large numbers of workers work for sweatshops in rural areas. Work in the sweatshops means that you are locked in the small world of the factory because workers in sweatshops have close-end management. This obviously limits their individual achievement. It also costs us morally. Do you think each of us who live in developed countries benefit significantly from the existence of sweatshops? Unfortunately, the answer is no. It costs us in higher taxes and a diminished quality of life. Even though the production prices are lower, we do not have a lower purchase price. For example, the factory-gate prices of Nike products are only around \$5, while we pay up to \$100! The multinational companies enjoy their high profits while workers live in poverty. With negative costs both to society and us, it's hard to believe that awareness of the pain that sweatshops bring to workers in lower classes comes so late.

In conclusion, sweatshops are against our basic rights as humans. Workers in sweatshops live in the poor conditions, are paid low wages, and work excessive hours we are not even able to imagine. From the origins of sweatshops until the current day, Nike not only costs society resources, but also costs us as human beings. With very few positive outcomes from international enterprises, we must take it upon ourselves to aid in repairing the damage that our nation has ignored for far too long.

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