

# How and why is this information about brands useful?

Having more detailed information about a particular brand that is linked to labour rights violations can be helpful in the efforts of labour rights activists and union members to engage with and/or campaign against the brand. Here are a few examples of how certain information can be helpful in your work.

## **Who owns the brand that appears on the label?**

Sometimes the brand name on the clothing label is not the same as the name of the company that owns that brand. For example, clothing bearing the Liz Claiborne label used to be manufactured for Liz Claiborne Inc. However, the Liz Claiborne brand was sold to JC Penney in 2011. At the same time, the company Liz Claiborne Inc. changed its name to “Fifth and Pacific.” While keeping track of who owns which brands can sometime get complicated, it is important to know which company is responsible for that brand so you know which company to approach.

## **What is the company’s history of engagement?**

Some companies are more open to engagement than others. In the past, Liz Claiborne Inc. was relatively open to engagement with civil society groups in Central America. However, JC Penney, which now owns the Liz Claiborne brand, has been much less responsive. So, if workers identify the Liz Claiborne label on clothes made in a factory where their rights are being violated, you might want to also look for labels of other companies at that factory that might be more willing to engage.

On the other hand, Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein -- two brand-name companies that were not very responsive to requests for action in the past -- are now owned by PVH Corp (for-

merly Phillips-Van Heusen), which has been more responsive to labour rights complaints. If workers identify the Tommy Hilfiger and/or Calvin Klein brands, you might want to attempt to engage with PVH Corp.

## **Does the brand produce for the university market?**

Unlike a company with a well-known brand name like Nike or adidas, Russell Athletic is a basics (T-shirt) manufacturer with little investment in its brand image and therefore less sensitive to bad publicity. When Russell violated the rights of its Honduran workers by shutting down the Jerzees de Honduras factory in January 2009 to eliminate the union at the factory, the company was not interested in engaging with the union and/or North American labour rights groups. However, Russell is also a university licensee and is therefore required to respect freedom of association in its factories producing T-shirts for the lucrative North American university market. Thus, it was possible to mobilize US students in a campaign to pressure their universities to cease doing business with Russell and request that the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) investigate the reasons for the closure. Facing the loss of university contracts, in November 2009 Russell agreed to engage with the WRC and with the CGT union of Honduras. A combination of campaigning, engagement and local organizing was successful in getting Russell to accept and negotiate with Honduran unions.

# BRANDS AND LABOUR RIGHTS

How and when to engage with brands?

## **Does the brand voluntarily disclose its factory lists?**

Sometimes a brand may deny any link to a factory where workers' rights are being violated. Unless you have labels or other convincing evidence in your possession, it can be hard to confirm their presence in the factory. However, some brands – Nike for example – disclose their global factory lists.

By checking Nike's factory list on the internet, a worker rights advocacy group can confirm whether the factory is an approved supplier facility, which makes it easier to push the company to take responsibility for worker rights abuses. (See [http://manufacturingmap.nikeinc.com/.](http://manufacturingmap.nikeinc.com/))

If you have evidence that a factory that is not on the brand's factory disclosure list is producing brand product, it is likely an "unauthorized subcontract facility." In such cases, the brand should be pushed to take responsibility for conditions in that factory. Pointing out that the brand factory list is incomplete shows you've done your research.