

COMPANIES AND THEIR BRANDS:

Holding companies accountable in an opaque industry

2026



Photo: Former APS workers in Specialized campaign, #PayYourWorkers

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is designed to assist trade unions, women's and labour rights organizations and researchers in developing strategies for brand engagement and/or campaigning to seek corrective action on labour rights violations by describing five strategic points of leverage.

The chart on page 3–8 lists:

- Major companies in the apparel industry; and
- Brands owned by each company.

The publication provides information for five strategic points of leverage, indicating on the chart which companies:

- Own manufacturing facilities (🏭);
- Disclose information about their supplier factories (📍);
- Produce collegiate apparel (🎓);
- Participate in a multi-stakeholder initiative (⚙️); and
- Are publicly traded (📊).

See pages 9-11 for more information on each point.

The chart shows that a number of companies currently operate with very little transparency or accountability, and therefore have fewer leverage points to use to help achieve remediation of worker rights violations occurring in factories producing their brand-name products.

In this updated *Companies and their Brands*, published in January 2026, we highlight two trends impacting the garment industry that have had negative implications for seeking remediation for factory level violations of workers' rights: 1) factory closures and mass layoffs in Central America; and 2) the expansion of private-equity controlled brand management companies (see page 12).

Neither of these trends nor the lack of leverage points for certain companies should discourage labour organizations from engaging with or campaigning against those companies when violations occur in their supplier factories. Sustained campaigns adapted for the new context will be crucial for promoting and protecting workers' rights moving forward.



Manufacturer Companies that own their own factories
(If yes, the company has more control over the factory)



Supply chain disclosure
(If yes, can link the factory to the brand)



Produces collegiate apparel
(If yes, complaints can be made to the WRC and FLA)



Member of MSI
(If yes, may be able to file a complaint)
ETI = Ethical Trade Initiative
FLA = Fair Labor Association



Publicly traded
(If yes, can find more public information, may approach institutional shareholders)

COMPANIES AND THEIR BRANDS

Abercrombie & Fitch



Abercrombie & Fitch

Hollister

Gilly Hicks

Your Personal Best (YPB)

adidas



FLA



adidas Originals

adidas Sportswear

Amazon



Amazon Aware

Cable Stitch

Moon and Back
by Hanna Andersson

Amazon Essentials

Core 10

The Drop

Aurique

Daily Ritual

Buttoned Down

Meraki

American Eagle Outfitters (AEO Inc.)



Aerie

Offline

Unsubscribed

American Eagle (AE)

Todd Snyder

Amer Sports



FLA



Arc'teryx

Peak Performance

Veilance

Armada

Salomon

Wilson



*Collegiate production icon refers only to the Wilson brand.

Aritzia



Babaton

Little Moon

The Superpuff

Denim Forum

Sunday Best

Tna

Golden

Ten

Wilfred

Authentic Brands Group (ABG)*

Above the Rim

Frederick's of Hollywood

Quicksilver

Aeropostale

Frye

Reebok

Airwalk

Hickey

Roxy

ARROW

Freeman

RVCA

Barneys New York

Guess**

Spyder

Billabong

IZOD

Tapout

Brooks Brothers

Jones New York

Ted Baker London

Champion**

Juicy Couture

Van Heusen

Dockers**

Lucky Brand

Vision Street Wear

Eddie Bauer

Misook

Volcom

Element

Nautica

Forever 21

Prince

*ABG owns several other brands, including celebrity brands, luxury brands and footwear brands. See [ABG website](#) for full listing and see page 16 for more on ABG.

**Notable recent acquisitions by ABG include Champion from Hanesbrands in 2024, Dockers from Levi Strauss & Co in May 2025, and a majority stake in Guess in August 2025.



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C&A *

| | | |
|----------------|--------------|------------------|
| Angelo Litrico | Clockhouse | Westbury |
| Avanti | Here & There | Yessica |
| Baby Club | Palomino | Yessica Pure |
| C&A | Rodeo | Your Sixth Sense |

*C&A Europe and C&A Modas in Brazil post their list of supplier factories on Open Supply Hub. C&A Mexico has not disclosed their supplier factories in recent years.



Carhartt

Carhartt

Carter's

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Carter's | Just One You (Target exclusive) | Oshkosh B'Gosh |
| Child of Mine (Walmart exclusive) | Little Planet | Simple Joys (Amazon exclusive) |

Color Image Apparel

Alo Yoga (Alo)*   FLA

Bella + Canvas*    FLA

*Alo Yoga and Bella+Canvas are owned by the same parent company, but continue to operate as separate companies. The icons for manufacturer, supply chain disclosure, multi-stakeholder initiative and FLA membership refer to each separate brand.

Columbia Sportswear Company FLA*

Columbia Mountain Hardwear prAna

*Columbia Sportswear Company is not a member of the FLA but does participate in the FLA's Collegiate Licensee Program.

Dick's Sporting Goods

Alpine Design DSG Walter Hagen
Calia VRST

Disney (The Walt Disney Company)*


Disney Pixar
Marvel Star Wars

*Disney owns many more brands than are listed above. For example, it owns production rights for all Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse and Toy Story as well as all Marvel characters.

Fanatics FLA

Fanatics Apparel Mitchell & Ness
Majestic Wincraft

Fruit of the Loom *

BVD Jerzees Vanity Fair
Fruit of the Loom Russell Athletic** 

*While Fruit of the Loom is not a university licensee, some of its wholly owned factories have collegiate production.

**Boxercraft is licensed for Russell Athletic collegiate production.



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Gap Inc.

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Athleta | Gap |
| Banana Republic | Old Navy |

Gildan Activewear* ** FLA

| | | |
|------------------|---------|------|
| American Apparel | Gildan | Peds |
| Comfort Colors | GOLDTOE | |

*Gildan acquired Hanesbrands and its numerous brands in December 2025. Further details will be forthcoming in 2026.

**While Gildan is not a university licensee, some of its wholly owned factories have collegiate production.

Guess *

| | | |
|--|----------|--------------|
| GUESS (Originals, Jeans, USA, Kids) | Marciano | rag & bone** |
|--|----------|--------------|

*ABG acquired a majority stake in Guess in August 2025 with plans to take the company private.

**rag&bone is a joint venture with brand management company WHP Global.

H&M

| | | |
|-------------------|-----|---------|
| All in Equestrian | COS | Monki |
| ARKET | H&M | Weekday |
| Cheap Monday | | |

Hanesbrands*

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| Bali | Hanes | Sheridan |
| Berlei | Just My Size | Sol y Oro |
| Bonds | Maidenform | Wonder Bra |
| Bras N Things | Playtex | Zorba |
| ComfortWash | Rinbros | |

*Gildan acquired Hanesbrands in December 2025. Further details will be forthcoming in 2026. Going forward, it is likely Gildan will assume responsibility for labour rights compliance in factories producing Hanesbrands products. Before the acquisition, Hanesbrands had already sold Champion and associated brands (Gear for Sports and Knights Apparel) to ABG in September 2024.

Inditex ETI

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Bershka | Oysho | Stradivarius |
| Lefties | Pull & Bear | Zara |
| Massimo Dutti | | |

Kohl's

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Apt. 9 | LC Lauren Conrad |
| Croft & Barrow | Simply Vera Vera Wang |
| Draper James | So |
| FLX | Sonoma Goods for Life |
| Jumping Beans | Tek Gear |



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Kontoor Brands



Helly Hansen

Musto

Wrangler

Lee

Rock & Republic

L2 Brands



League

Legacy

Ouray

Lacoste



Lacoste

Levi Strauss & Co*



Beyond Yoga

Levi's

Levi Strauss Signature

*Levi's sold Dockers to brand management company ABG in May 2025.

L.L. Bean



L.L. Bean

Loblaw



Joe Fresh

Lululemon Athletica



lululemon

Mountain Equipment Company



MEC

New Balance Athletics



New Balance

Warrior

New Era Cap*

New Era Cap



'47 Brand



*New Era Cap acquired '47 Brand in August 2024, but the two continue to operate as separate companies. The icons for supply chain disclosure, multi-stakeholder initiative and FLA membership refer to each separate brand.

Next Level Apparel



Next Level

Nike



Converse

Jordan

Nike



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Nordstrom



| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| BP | Halogen | Treasure & Bond |
| Caslon | Nordstrom | Tucker + Tate |
| Chelsea28 | Open Edit | Zella |

Outerstuff



FLA

Outerstuff

Patagonia



FLA

Patagonia

Puma



FLA



| | | |
|-----------------|--|--------|
| Cobra Puma Golf |  Puma | Stichd |
|-----------------|--|--------|

*Collegiate production icon refers only to Cobra Puma Golf.

PVH Corp.



Calvin Klein
Tommy Hilfiger

Ralph Lauren Corporation



| | | |
|-----------------|--------|--------------|
| Chaps | Lauren | Polo |
| Double RL (RRL) | Luxury | Ralph Lauren |

Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI Co-op)



REI Co-op

SanMar Corporation



FLA

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| CornerStone | Port Authority | Volunteer Knitwear |
| District Threads | Port & Company | |
| Mercer + Mettle | Sport-Tek | |

Shein*

| | | |
|-------------|----------|-------|
| Cozy Pixies | Glowmode | ROMWE |
| Dazy | Luvlette | |
| Emery Rose | MOTF | |

*Shein has attempted public listings in the U.S. and London, but both processes are stalled due to regulatory concerns. The company is reportedly now considering a public listing in Hong Kong.



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Target Corporation



| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| A New Day | Cat & Jack | Original Use |
| All in Motion | Cloud Island | Shade & Shore |
| Art Class | Colsie | Universal Thread |
| Auden | Future Collective | Wild Fable |
| Ava & Viv | Goodfellow & Co. | |
| Boots & Barkley | Joy Lab | |

Victoria's Secret



| | | |
|----------|------|-------------------|
| Adore Me | PINK | Victoria's Secret |
|----------|------|-------------------|

Walmart



| | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Athletic Works | George | Terra & Sky |
| EV1 | No Boundaries | Time and Tru |
| Free Assembly | Joyspun | Wonder Nation |

Under Armour



FLA



| | | |
|-------|--------------|------------------------|
| Curry | Under Armour | Unless Collective, Inc |
|-------|--------------|------------------------|

Unrivald Teamwear




FLA

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Champion Teamwear | Gear for Sports | Knights Apparel |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|

VF Corporation



| | | |
|--|----------------|---------------------|
| Altra | Napapijri | Timberland |
| Icebreaker | Smartwool | Vans (Off the Wall) |
| JanSport  | The North Face | |

*VF sold Dickies to brand management company Bluestar Alliance in November 2025.

**Collegiate production icon refers only to the JanSport brand.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE CHART

Company name and the brands it owns

Most of the companies listed on the chart are North American. We've included a few European companies, as well as Chinese fast fashion e-retailer Shein. All have a significant retail and/or sourcing presence in the Americas.

Many companies own more than one brand, and the apparel brands they own often change over time. Given the current upheaval in international trade and uncertainty in the industry, it is important to compare the "brand" list on the

chart with the list on the company's website. This is particularly true for large companies like Amazon, Target, and more recently, Authentic Brands Group (ABG), whose brand portfolios change regularly as they sell some brands and/or acquire new ones (see page 16 for more on ABG).

In the case of retailers like Nordstrom and Kohl's, we have also included some of their exclusive lines, even though they may not own the brand.

Manufacturer (🏭)

Companies with this icon own at least some of the factories where their products are made. As a result, the company is the direct employer of the workers at those wholly-owned factories and thus has the ability to improve wages and benefits, implement corrective action where workers' rights are being violated, and directly negotiate with worker representatives where there is a union.

Supply chain disclosure (📍)

When companies disclose information about the factories where their products are made, it is much easier to link those companies to a particular factory and engage with them to address labour rights violations.

Companies with this icon publish at least the names and locations of the factories that make their products, posting the information on their website and/or on the Open Supply Hub (OS Hub), a free, accessible supply chain mapping platform.¹

As part of efforts to increase transparency in the industry, the Fair Labor Association (FLA) multi-stakeholder initiative has required its members to disclose supplier factory information since 2022.

To facilitate access to companies' factory disclosure information, MSN maintains a research tool on our website with direct links to the information each company publishes about its supplier factories.²

Some companies disclose additional data beyond factory names and locations, such as the name of the factory's parent company, which can provide additional leverage in individual cases of labour rights violations.

For example, when seeking corrective action for egregious violations of freedom of association at the SAE-A/Winners factory in Guatemala, the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) wrote to all brand clients that source from that factory, but also other factories owned by the same large Korean multinational SAE-A. Such cases could set an important precedent that may help leverage action on future cases involving the same parent company.³

¹ Open Supply Hub is free for registered users to search the online data. Users are charged a fee if they need to download significant amounts of data or need additional services from OS Hub.

² MSN Companies and Brands Research Tools. See document 2. *Companies and their Brands: Factory Disclosure Lists*. maquilasolidarity.org/en/companies-and-brands-research-tools.

³ WRC Factory Investigation: Winners. workersrights.org/factory-investigation/winners.

Despite a trend toward increased transparency in the industry, according to the most recent Fashion Transparency Index published by Fashion Revolution in 2023, secrecy continues to be a major barrier to ensuring workers' rights and addressing environmental impacts in the industry. Only 52% of the 250 companies they surveyed disclosed factory information.⁴

Produces collegiate apparel ()

Companies with this icon produce apparel bearing the name and/or logos of universities and their sports teams. These companies are more vulnerable to pressure from universities, many of which have ethical licensing and purchasing policies and the purchasing power to compel their suppliers to remediate worker rights violations. Also, many major US universities are members of the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) and/or the Fair Labor Association (FLA), both of which receive and investigate complaints of labour rights violations occurring at factories that supply university-licensed apparel (see more about the FLA and WRC in the MSI section immediately below).

To help identify companies directly producing for universities, the WRC maintains a public database of factories that produce collegiate apparel and accessories.⁵

Member of a multi-stakeholder initiative (MSI) ()

Companies with this icon are members of the Fair Labor Association (FLA) or the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). When companies are members of an MSI like these, serious labour rights violations can be reported and potentially investigated through the MSI's complaint procedure.

The FLA's members include major North American brands and some manufacturers in the garment sector. The FLA has a third-party complaint mechanism through which workers, unions and worker rights organizations can register complaints about alleged FLA code violations at specific factories, which can trigger an investigation.⁶ The effectiveness of the FLA's complaint mechanism, however, has been the subject of some debate.

Two of the companies included in the chart are members of the UK-based Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). That MSI, however, does not have a very robust complaints process.

Although the WRC is not a multi-stakeholder initiative, as an independent labour rights monitoring organization, it accepts third party complaints regarding factory-level worker rights violations, carries out investigations, and publicly reports on its findings and the status of remediation.

Publicly traded company ()

When a company is publicly traded – that is, its shares are bought and sold by outside investors on stock exchanges – it is legally required to report more information to the public about the company and its activities. In some cases, institutional shareholders, such as foundations, pension funds and religious orders, have supported worker rights campaigns by pressuring companies in which they hold shares to improve labour rights policies and practices.

For example, on April 22, 2021, seven years after the Rana Plaza disaster, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) published a statement, endorsed by 181 global institutions representing over US\$4 trillion in assets,

⁴ Fashion Transparency Index 2023. fashionrevolution.org/fashion-transparency-index. Fashion Revolution's 2024 and 2025 reports ranked fashion brands on the disclosure of their climate and energy-related policies specifically.

⁵ WRC Factory Database. search.workersrights.org. For instructions on how to use the database see document 2. *Companies and their Brands: Factory Disclosure Lists* at: maquilasolidarity.org/en/companies-and-brands-research-tools.

⁶ To access information on current complaints, see: fairlabor.org/accountability/fair-labor-investigations/tpc-tracking-chart.

which called on global apparel companies sourcing from Bangladesh to recommit to the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety.⁷

Workers and/or labour rights organizations have also been able to directly influence shareholders and company boards by giving testimony on labour rights issues at annual company shareholder meetings.

Organizations like Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE)⁸ and labour rights networks like the Global Unions' Committee on Workers' Capital (CWC), based at SHARE, organize actions and long-term strategies to build investor support for the priorities defined by workers and their unions.

A note on companies' "licensees"

While the chart lists companies' owned brands, it does not include information about their contractual agreements that give them the right (license) to produce and sell brand-name products of another company. Most companies do not disclose information about these licensee relationships when they publish their factory lists. While a few companies, such as adidas, Hanesbrands, Fruit of the Loom, Kontoor, and New Balance, disclose which of their supplier factories produce "licensed" products, they do not disclose the name of the licensee company.

Unfortunately, these opaque sourcing relationships add to the confusion as to which company is the direct client with a specific factory when addressing violations.

Fanatics, for example, is a major licensee for other companies that sell team sportswear and fan gear, including other apparel companies and professional sports leagues. While Fanatics may have the direct contractual

relationship with the factory producing the clothes, if identified, the company or association it is producing for, such as Nike, Dallas Cowboys or the National Football League (NFL), could also be pressured to address labour rights violations in that factory.

This type of knowledge about licensee relationships increases the ability of labour rights organizations and other stakeholders to successfully remediate violations.

In one case in El Salvador, Barco Uniforms had the direct relationship with the Industrias Florenzi factory producing Grey's Anatomy brand scrubs under a license from Disney. In order for workers from that factory to win a severance agreement from Barco Uniforms,⁹ it was necessary to identify and campaign against Grey's Anatomy and media giant Disney, as the owner of the Grey's Anatomy brand and ABC television.

⁷ Access ICCR statement on Bangladesh, *With Work Remaining and Covid19 Still Raging, Investors Caution Against Allowing the Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety to Expire*, here: iccr.org/work-remaining-and-covid19-still-raging-investors-caution-against-allowing-bangladesh-accord-fire.

⁸ Read more about SHARE's work at: share.ca

⁹ *El Salvador: Industrias Florenzi workers win US\$1 million in severance pay*. MSN, January 13, 2022. maquilasolidarity.org/en/el-salvador-industrias-florenzi-workers-win-us1-million-severance-pay.

TRENDS IMPACTING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE REMEDIATION FOR VIOLATIONS OF WORKERS' RIGHTS

Introduction

The past five years have seen major disruptions in the global garment industry, including the global pandemic in 2020, the growth of fast fashion and e-commerce, widespread closures and mass layoffs, the expansion of private equity-controlled brand management companies, and more recently, sweeping changes to global trade in 2025.

During these times of major economic and political disruptions, garment workers often face uncertainty, increased factory level violations of their rights, sudden unemployment and severance theft. Efforts to promote workers' rights and hold companies accountable for respecting the rights of workers in their supply chain become all the more crucial, even as new challenges arise.

Below we profile two of these industry trends with concerning implications for efforts to leverage brand action and achieve remediation for factory level violations of workers' rights: 1) mass layoffs and factory closures in Central America; and 2) the expansion of private equity-controlled brand management companies like Authentic Brands Group.



Photo: Former Industrias Florenzi workers in Grey's Anatomy campaign, #PayYourWorkers

1. Factory closures and mass layoffs in Central America

The wave of factory closures and mass layoffs in garment manufacturing facilities in Central America over the past five years has had a devastating impact on garment workers, their families and their unions.

In Honduras and El Salvador, many of these closures and layoffs have been in large, wholly-owned facilities of major North American manufacturers of apparel basics, such as Hanesbrands, Delta Apparel, Fruit of the Loom and Gildan Activewear. By the end of 2025, Delta Apparel had filed for bankruptcy, Fruit of the Loom had

ceased to be a major presence in Central America, and Hanesbrands had been acquired by Gildan, with specifics pending. What is not in doubt is that Gildan is now the largest basics apparel manufacturer and employer in the region.

In Honduras, prior to 2023 those four companies directly employed the majority of garment workers in that country, and over the previous decade unions had been successful in negotiating collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) with improved wages and benefits in many of the larger factories. A 2022 study

by Mark Anner¹⁰ estimated that approximately 44% of the country's garment workers were covered by and benefiting from a CBA at that time.

As a result of the closures that have taken place over the last two years, Honduran garment unions are seeing their hard-won gains being lost. Between April and December 2025, Fruit of the Loom (FOTL) closed its last three unionized garment and textile factories in the country, laying off approximately 4,000 workers and reneging on a 2009 ground-breaking agreement with the Central General de Trabajadores (CGT) that had guaranteed freedom of association at all FOTL facilities in Honduras and opened the door to unionization at other factories in the country. According to the WRC, FOTL once employed approximately 7,000 workers in unionized facilities in Honduras. The company has since eliminated over 90% of those jobs.¹¹

The closure of Hanesbrands' wholly-owned facilities in Honduras has been just as dramatic.¹² In 2022, Hanesbrands owned six facilities employing over 9,000 people. By the end of 2025, the company had closed its last wholly-owned facilities in the country. The latest closure alone left more than 2,200 workers from the Confecciones del Valle facilities unemployed. The largest Hanesbrands factories in Honduras were all unionized, with at least two of these producing the Hanesbrands' Champion brand, which was sold to brand management company Authentic Brands Group (ABG) in September 2024.

Gildan Activewear closed its San Miguel factory in June 2023, leaving 2,700 workers unemployed at the time.

In El Salvador, Hanesbrands and FOTL went from owning 12 factories in 2022, three of them with a union presence, to currently owning and operating only seven.



Delta Apparel, which produced for a number of major brands in their facilities in Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, filed for bankruptcy in June 2024, leaving thousands of workers unemployed and owed millions of dollars in severance and other legal terminal benefits.

Together these layoffs, particularly those at well-known unionized facilities, have widespread impacts for workers needing to address factory level workers' rights violations. The loss of union representation and coverage by a CBA leave workers with fewer resources to address rights violations and/or create working conditions in which they are less likely to occur.

In addition, the fact that so many factories with the presence of one or more unions have closed will have a chilling effect, discouraging workers from even attempting to exercise their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining in the region.

¹⁰ *Bargaining for Decent Work and Beyond: Transforming Work and Lives through Collective Bargaining Agreements in the Honduran Maquila Sector*. Center for Global Workers' Rights, Penn State, Dr. Mark Anner, May 24, 2022. ler.la.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/06/Honduras-maquila-report.pdf.

¹¹ *A Leading Garment Brand Exits the High Road*. WRC, June 3, 2025. workersrights.org/commentary/a-leading-garment-brand-exits-the-high-road

¹² The December 2025 acquisition of the company by Gildan for \$2.2 billion has eliminated Hanesbrands' role as a major independent player in the region. Further details will be forthcoming in 2026. Hanesbrands had already been seriously weakened by the sale of Champion in 2024.

Closures of unionized facilities, and their impacts go beyond Central America

Are Unionized Garment Factories Being Targeted for Closures?¹³

In July 2025, Sourcing Journal's Jasmin Malik Chua published an important article comparing the impact of the closure of unionized facilities in Sri Lanka and Honduras. A wholly-owned facility of British-owned fashion brand Next in Sri Lanka and two Fruit of the Loom facilities in Honduras, Jerzees Nueva D a and Confecciones Dos Caminos. We excerpt from the Honduras portion of that article below.

According to the article, Fruit of the Loom has defended its 2025 closures... as a 'multiyear restructuring' of its operations due to 'significant disruption in the North American apparel market....'

The article quotes a "blistering online rejoinder to Fruit of the Loom" posted on the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) website: "These closures are tragic for thousands of workers affected: for nearly 15 years, they enjoyed respect for their right to freedom of association and better wages and conditions achieved through collective bargaining... And, while it is common for factories to close in the garment industry, it is deeply discouraging to see a facility shuttered that has been widely recognized as a symbol of genuine respect for workers' associational rights – in a region and industry where these rights have often been trampled."

Or maybe the closures were economically motivated... just not in the way they are being framed, said Scott Nova, WRC Executive Director. Unions, after all, are in the business of raising the cost of employment through higher wages and safer, more humane workplace conditions. "To put it bluntly, you can't sell the concept of unionization to employers that it's going to make things cheaper."



Photo: Union members call on FOTL to reopen factory, SITRAJERZEESND, CGT

¹³ Are Unionized Garment Factories Being Targeted for Closures? Sourcing Journal, Jasmin Malik Chua, July 1, 2025. sourcingjournal.com/topics/labor/fruit-of-the-loom-next-honduras-sri-lanka-factory-unionized-closure-1234753941.



Photo: Style Avenue factory closure, FEASIES

Illegal closures and severance theft

In addition to the factories wholly owned by international manufacturing companies, over this same period, a significant number of supplier factories in Central America have closed, leaving workers with millions of dollars in outstanding benefits, most notably severance, back wages, and social security payments.

Despite important precedents, too few brands proactively assume the responsibility to ensure workers are paid legally owed severance and other terminal benefits when supplier factories close, and the Fair Labor Association (FLA), which includes many of these brands, does not require participating companies to compensate workers when their suppliers fail to live up to their legal obligations to provide terminal benefits.¹⁴

In response to severance theft, local unions have filed legal injunctions and organized national campaigns. When those efforts proved unsuccessful, they expanded their strategies to seek the support of international allies, often filing complaints with the WRC, and involving the Solidarity Center local offices, MSN and other labour rights organizations in coordinated campaigns to pressure brands to live up to their responsibility to ensure the workers making their products receive full severance and other benefits owing.¹⁵

In Central America, significant victories include securing contributions of over US\$4 million for the former workers of three factories in El Salvador (APS El Salvador, Style Avenue, and Industrias Florenzi); and US\$1.5 million for the former workers of Industrial Hana in Guatemala (see more details below).

These campaign victories are important to note, in part to recognize the incredible amount of time and energy invested by workers, unions, and international

¹⁴ While the FLA does not require its participating brands to take responsibility if their suppliers fail to provide workers their legally owed severance, back wages, and terminal benefits, some university codes do.

¹⁵ Read more about the WRC's successful remediation efforts in wage theft cases, spanning more than a decade: workersrights.org/issues/wage-theft.

labour rights organizations for workers to receive what is already legally owed to them when brands do not proactively assume responsibility after factories close. It is time that brands and multi-stakeholder organizations, such as the FLA, accept their responsibilities to workers when factories that

produce their or their affiliates' products close, leaving workers owed thousands, often millions of dollars of legally required back wages, severance and other terminal benefits.

2. Expansion of brand management companies like ABG

An increasing number of high-profile brands have been bought by brand management companies, a shift with potentially huge implications for transparency and accountability in the industry. Beyond the initial impact of major changes in sourcing and the closure of wholly-owned factories by companies like Hanesbrands, the brand management companies' complex business relationships make it more difficult to trace sourcing relationships in efforts to hold companies accountable and seek remediation for worker rights violations.

Authentic Brands Group (ABG) is one of the most notable among the brand management companies due to their recent high-profile acquisitions. Adding to an already extensive portfolio, ABG acquired Reebok for \$2.46 billion in 2022, Hanesbrands' popular Champion brand for US\$1.2 billion in 2024, Levi Strauss & Co's well-known Dockers brand for US\$311 million in the first quarter of 2025, and a majority stake in Guess in August 2025.

Companies like ABG¹⁶ buy the intellectual property of a brand (name, logo, trademark), often purchasing brands out of bankruptcy for a relatively low price, cutting costs, and hoping to gain profits for investors based on the brand's reputation. A complex network of partnerships, which may change often, is established with retailers, private equity firms and other investors, as well as operating companies that actively take on the role of the day-to-day operations including design, sourcing and distribution. For example, Unrivaled

Teamwear, Gildan, Fanatics, and Target are four of many ABG partners for the Champion brand.

Strong corporate responsibility measures and worker rights protections are often missing from the brand management company model.

In terms of the leverage points tracked on our chart, there are none listed for ABG, since it is not a publicly traded company, university licensee, a member of a multi-stakeholder initiative, or a manufacturer with wholly-owned facilities. In addition, ABG does not fully disclose the companies licensed to source and distribute their owned brands.

The complex nature of brand management companies' business relationships and the lack of certain leverage points does not mean that workers and allies should avoid engaging with and campaigning against brand management companies and their partners to call for greater corporate accountability and remediation in cases of workers' rights violations.

New research and campaigning strategies can reveal which pressure points may motivate these companies and/or their licensees to take corrective action. The Industrial Hana case, profiled below, provides just one example of these complex relationships and how organizations have successfully campaigned despite the challenges.

¹⁶ Other private-equity-backed brand management companies that own well-known brands include [WHP Global](#) (Express, Bonobos, Vera Wang), [Iconix Brand Company](#) (Salt Life, Mossimo, Mudd, London Fog, Umbro), and [Bluestar Alliance](#) (Dickies).

Guatemalan workers and allies win remediation after campaign targeting ABG and partners

When the Industrial Hana garment factory in Guatemala closed in October 2023, it failed to pay severance to approximately 250 employees who were owed an estimated US\$1.5 million, according to Guatemalan law. An investigation by the WRC found that, at the time of closure, the factory was producing American Eagle Outfitters (AEO), Puma and Lucky Brand apparel. None of the brands had a direct relationship with the factory, which had been subcontracted by their suppliers.

The WRC engaged with AEO, Puma, and Lucky Brand, as well as Lucky Brand's owners ABG, SPARC Group and fast fashion giant Shein (a partial owner of SPARC Group at the time).¹⁷ AEO and Puma each made contributions of US\$500,000 toward the severance owed, with US\$1 million distributed to workers in January 2025. Lucky Brand and its owners, on the other hand, initially avoided any serious engagement or contributions to remediate the severance theft.

International labour rights organizations responded to the companies' lack of action. The WRC published a public commentary acknowledging AEO and Puma's contributions and highlighting ABG, SPARC Group and Shein's failure to address severance theft at Industrial Hana. Industry publications profiled the case. Partners for Dignity and Rights also engaged in public campaigning and produced excellent research on the business relationships behind ABG.¹⁸

Eventually, the persistent efforts of these organizations resulted in Lucky Brand making a "humanitarian contribution" to cover an additional \$500,000 of the total owed, almost a year after AEO and Puma publicly agreed to make contributions.

This is a huge campaign success that also highlights the tremendous amount of time and resources needed just to ensure workers are paid what they are legally owed, an amount brands should take responsibility for, without the need for public campaigning.



Photo: Former Industrial Hana workers in Lucky Brand campaign, SITRAHANA

¹⁷ Tracing the owners of Lucky Brand for the Industrial Hana case: In an example of the complex nature of ABG's business relationships, SPARC Group was a private company and joint venture between ABG, Simon Property Group (the largest owner of malls in the US), and fast fashion giant Shein. SPARC Group served as an operating company in charge of day-to-day operations for numerous ABG brands like Aeropostale, Brooks Brothers, Eddie Bauer, Lucky Brand, and Nautica. For Lucky Brand, SPARC Group was the "core licensee and operating partner", overseeing the brand's sourcing, product design, wholesale, retail and e-commerce operations. In the time since Industrial Hana closed, however, SPARC Group merged with JC Penney to form Catalyst Brands, a new organization that will still serve as an operator for most of the same ABG-owned brands and whose shareholders still include ABG, Simon Property Group, and Shein.

¹⁸ *Not So Lucky: How Lucky Brand, Shein, and Private Equity Fleeced Guatemalan Garment Workers*. Partners for Dignity and Rights, February 28, 2025. dignityandrights.org/2025/02/not-so-lucky-how-lucky-brand-shein-and-private-equity-fleeced-guatemalan-garment-workers.

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