**Synthèse de documents ⎯ Globalization**

**1) I'm An Anti-Sweatshop Protester — Here's Why I Wear Fast Fashion**

Two years ago today, I was a junior at the University of Southern California when I heard about the Rana Plaza collapse. Over the course of the day, I watched as the death toll steadily rose. The only thing I could think was that the same people who died had literally made the clothes I was wearing. April 24, 2013 was the day I decided to dedicate the next two years of my life fighting alongside Bangladeshi garment workers to ensure that these types of disasters never happen again. Today, I'm a national staff organizer with [United Students Against Sweatshops](http://usas.org/), and my closet is still stocked with fast fashion. Here's why I don’t think that’s hypocritical.   
  
An overwhelming majority of fast fashion is produced in sweatshops all around the world, and that's no secret. The unjust and sometimes deadly conditions garment workers endure to produce our apparel aren't that shrouded, either. Workers in Swaziland were [exposed to toxic chemicals](http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Global-Action/Swaziland-Textile-Workers-Sickened-from-a-Dangerous-Chemical); preventable [factory fires](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/08/bangladesh-factory-fires-fashion-latest-crisis) and [collapses](https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2014/04/65418/rana-plaza-anniversary) killed thousands in Bangladesh. These things happened, and were reported widely.  
  
When confronted with this kind of information, the knee-jerk reaction is [to boycott](https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2013/06/47880/bangladesh-factory-america-response). I’ve experienced this first-hand countless times; when I introduce these horror-story realities to concerned students and consumers, the first solution they typically propose is to stop buying from these brands. But, individual boycotts are rarely effective, and worse yet, they can be dangerous for garment workers who are organizing and fighting for their own rights.  
  
In 2008, Russell Athletics, a subsidiary of Fruit of the Loom, shut down a factory called [Jerzees de Honduras](https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/web-exclusive-historic-victory-as-jerzees-de-honduras-workers-win-break-thr) after workers attempted to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement to combat sweatshop abuses. The student labor organization I work for ran a nationally coordinated campaign on college campuses demanding that [universities sever ties with Russell](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/18/business/18labor.html) unless the company agreed to negotiate with its workers. The campaign culminated in nearly 100 universities dropping Russell. In total, Russell lost tens of millions of dollars through strategic corporate campaigning, which resulted in a historic agreement between the company and its workers.   
  
Now, imagine that if instead of leveraging these big-budget, strategic relationships, USAS tried to convince individual consumers to stop buying Russell. How many potential Russell customers would have had to change their minds and not purchase a single T-shirt or hoodie in order to have the same impact on the brand?  
  
Here’s the thing: Even if you harbor a heavy fast-fashion shopping habit, you are ultimately not responsible for unethical labor practices. Stores aren’t even responsible, and neither are brands’ sales teams. It’s the top decision-makers at the corporations who are, and that's where change needs to happen.

Brands place immense pressure on governments in the global south to maintain lax regulations, low trade barriers, and cheap wages, and because countries like Bangladesh rely heavily on these businesses for economic solvency, they are willing to stop at nothing to ensure the corporations are kept happy.

The solution is internationally coordinated efforts to hold brands accountable and listen to what their workers need. Workers don’t need pity or charity; they need solidarity and allies who are willing to strategize with them about how to hold brands accountable. Survivors and families of survivors of the Rana Plaza tragedy are still waiting for apparel companies to be held accountable. However, these workers have specifically asked us not to boycott: "Boycotts put our jobs at risk. The last thing we want is brands to pull their orders out of Bangladesh. We need these jobs, but we need these jobs with dignity," says Kalpona Akter, the executive director of the [Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity](http://www.solidaritycenter.org/tag/bangladesh/).

So, what about the fact that I’m wearing sweatshop-made clothes as I write a piece about my work in an anti-sweatshop organization? If I were to truly divest myself from all forms of sweatshop abuses, I would need to grow my own cotton, because cotton farmers are mostly migrant workers who are regularly abused. I would need to spin my own thread, create my own fabric, harvest and make my own dye, and sew my own clothes. I could, instead, spend that time strategically campaigning to pressure brands to improve working conditions for workers globally and make long-lasting changes for people who already have the skills to make clothes more beautiful than I ever could.

Julia Wang, www.refinery29.com, April 2015

**2) Bangalore: India's IT hub**

Once known for its lush farmlands, it's now home to some of the best international and domestic technology companies which are creating millions of jobs for young Indian engineers from all across the country.

Like 24-year-old Zubair Aslam from Uttar Pradesh in northern India. He moved to Bangalore for a job as **a software engineer**. He says he is living his dream. "I'm earning as much as my father - he has worked for 31 years as a government servant," he says. "Whatever he is earning now - that was my starting salary. I started at that level. So it feels good."

It all began in the 70s when the state government had demarcated a large piece of land outside Bangalore for an electronic city. One advantage was that Indian educational institutions were offering good courses in computer engineering and the country was creating computer professionals **on a par with** the rest of the world.

By 1983, both Infosys and another future tech giant, Wipro, moved to Bangalore and the country's fledgling IT industry started to grow around the two firms. But the city's global foray only really began when Texas Instruments opened its facility in the city in 1984.

After the economic liberalisation in the 90s, India's software export industry has grown rapidly. Companies here have a huge cost advantage - an English-speaking, highly-educated workforce that's available at less than a quarter of the wages paid in the US or Europe.

"Today if you take the top 10 IT services companies in the world, you'll find four or five Indian companies," says Kris Gopalakrishnan, co-founder of Infosys. "That's what has given confidence to not just young people, but other industries also, to say that from India you can be a world class company, from India you compete with the best in the world and from India you can actually go out and conquer the world."

The industry now adds more than 200,000 jobs a year providing employment to nearly 10 million people. With more than 500 companies offering **back-office and outsourcing services**, the industry here generates more than $17bn revenue a year. But it no longer wants to be known as just an outsourcing hub, companies here are moving up the value chain to become global powerhouses. Plenty of big ideas, talent, and technology infrastructure meant that global research and development too has moved here, making Bangalore a hub for entrepreneurial growth with many networking groups who regularly meet at coffee shops offering peer support and ideas. They are turning from job seekers to job creators.

Like Amit Sharma who founded Gountucked.com, a company that makes funky T-shirts. He came back from the US to start his company in Bangalore. "The biggest advantage is that labour is so cheap," he says. "As a start-up you can still hire somebody to do the running around and don't have to deal with the administrative complexity yourself. "So the same amount of time and money can allow you to take a much larger risk in India compared to the Silicon Valley."

Shilpa Kannan, BBC News, September, 2013.

**3) Do globalisation and world trade fuel inequality?**

Inequality has become a major political preoccupation in the advanced economies – and for good reason. In the US, according to the recently released [World Inequality Report 2018](http://wir2018.wid.world/), the share of national **income claimed by** the top 1% of the population rose from 11% in 1980 to 20% in 2014, compared to just 13% for the entire bottom half of the population. Qualitatively similar, though less pronounced, trends characterise other major countries such as [France](http://wid.world/country/france/), [Germany](http://wid.world/country/germany/), and the [UK](http://wid.world/country/united-kingdom/).

What if we look at the world as a whole, rather than individual countries? As Columbia’s Xavier Sala-i-Martin pointed out in [2002](http://www.nber.org/papers/w8904) and [2006](http://www.columbia.edu/~xs23/papers/pdfs/qjec.2006.121.2.pdf), even as inequality has risen in nearly every country, inequality across countries has decreased, owing largely to the success of developing countries such as China and India in raising their **per capita incomes** since the 1980s.

Multiple factors, including urbanisation, high savings rates, and improved access to education, undoubtedly **underlie** these countries’ impressive performance. But it becomes apparent that trade has been among the [most powerful drivers](http://www.jstor.org/stable/117025?se) of Asia’s economic [success](http://www.nber.org/papers/w5732), and thus the [convergence](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0963819042000300573) between the developed and developing worlds.

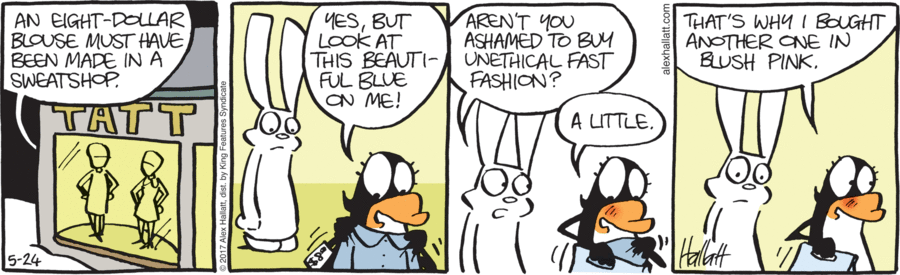
As Pinelopi Goldberg and Nina Pavcnik [reported](https://ideas.repec.org/a/aea/jeclit/v45y2007i1p39-82.html) in 2007, the expectation that trade would reduce inequality in the countries with the most unskilled workers, because their services are in greater demand in an integrated world market, **has not been borne out**. They write: “There is overwhelming evidence that less-skilled workers in developing countries **are** generally **not better off**, at least not relative to workers with higher skill or education levels.”

Ten years later, inequality continues to worsen **within** developing countries, including the so-called BRICS emerging economies. In [Brazil](http://wid.world/country/brazil/), the top 1% accounts for 25% of national income. In [Russia](http://wid.world/country/russian-federation/), the income share of the top 1% of the population increased from 4% in 1980 to 20% in 2015. Likewise, in [India](http://wid.world/country/india/), that figure rose from 6% in 1982 to 22% in 2013. In [China](http://wid.world/country/china/), it surged from 6% in 1978 to 14% in 2015. And, in [South Africa](http://wid.world/country/south-africa/), it rose from 9% in 1987 to 19% in 2012. A look at the top 10% of earners shows similar trends.

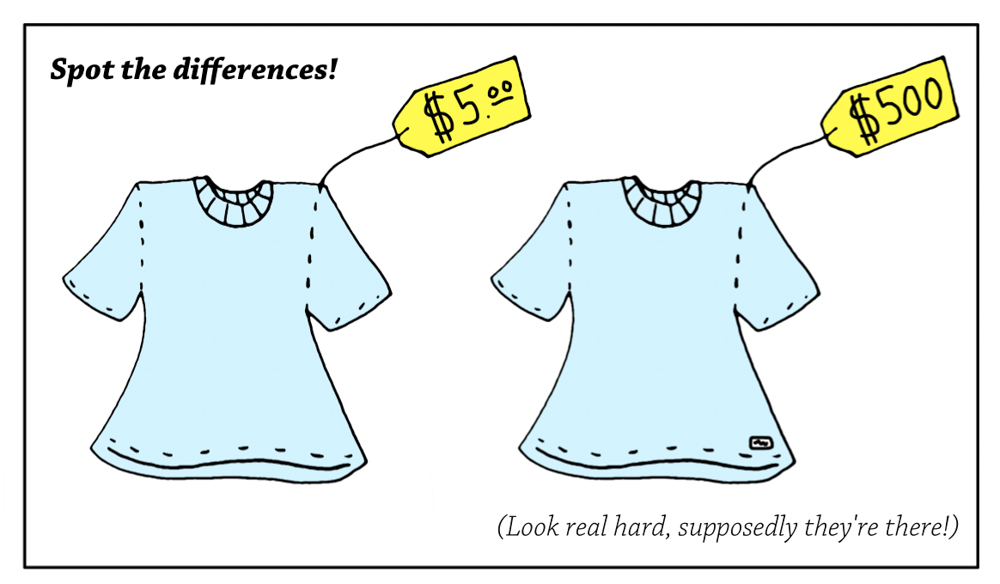
[Inequality](https://www.theguardian.com/inequality) is clearly a serious problem that merits political attention. But focusing on trade is not the way to resolve it.

Jeffrey Frankel, prof. at Harvard University, *The Guardian*, January, 2018.

**4) Alex Hallatt, 2017.**

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