

San Antonio Against Sweatshops

Fact Sheet: City Funds and Sweatshop Abuses

The Case of Cintas: A Contractor for the City of San Antonio

According to San Antonio's purchasing department, Cintas is one of two companies that provide uniforms for Fire Department mechanics and EMS supply clerks. It is also a company that has been cited numerous times for labor and human rights abuses, both in operations it directly runs and in factories that it subcontracts out to.

Island Apparel Factory, Haiti

In 2004, an investigation into the Island Apparel Factory in Haiti revealed several labor rights violations. Workers were not given clean water to drink – the only water they received was water placed in a tub that had green matter on the surface. The bathrooms were filthy. Workers were required to work longer than the 48 hours per week allowed by Haitian law. Workers were not allowed to speak to each other during working hours and the manager of the plant regularly harassed workers, including allegations of sexual harassment. When workers tried to organize to ask for improvements they were either suspended or fired. The wages at the factory were so low that the workers had to live in shanty towns.

Calypso Factory, Nicaragua

In 2006, the Workers Rights Consortium, an independent monitoring agency, did an investigation of the Calypso Factory in Nicaragua and discovered a series of labor violations. Workers in the factory were forced to work overtime, facing penalties if they refused to do so. This overtime work was often unpaid. The factory health clinic did not have the majority of medicines covered by legally mandated health insurance. The factory also failed to provide adequate personal protective equipment for work involving needles and machinery. As with Island Apparel, when workers tried to organize to ask for improved conditions, they were rebuffed by management.

Treatment of Cintas Laundry Workers

Since 2003, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found nearly 250 violations of health and safety standards at Cintas' U.S. laundries. OSHA assessed more than \$3.1 million in initial penalties since last August for deadly conditions at six separate facilities, including one that led to a worker's death in a 300 degree dryer. Just weeks before this tragedy, a worker in another facility had her arm shattered.

How a SweatFree Ordinance Would Help

The example of Cintas highlights the reality that a number of garment suppliers engage in labor violations or outsource to factories that do. Right now we do not know exactly where the uniforms for the city's employees are being made. So a city sweatfree ordinance would do the following:

- Require companies that contract with the city to provide garments and related services to disclose basic information about the factories that they outsource the city's work to, including the name, location, and contact information.
- Require these garment contractors to sign an affidavit with the city ensuring that neither they nor the companies they subcontract to engage in sweatshop practices.
- Require the city to work with an independent monitoring agency to do complaint-based monitoring of these workplaces.
- Create a process whereby the city, with the help of the monitoring agency, will work with companies to address labor violations that surface.