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Nike Wage Theft Extra Credit

The Nike corporation has a contract with the University of Pittsburgh and several other major universities to make apparel and other accessories. These include t-shirts, hooded sweatshirts, basketballs and hats that are ubiquitous among students and fans alike. Nike is responsible for over \$800,000 in unpaid wages to the 3,330 factory workers at the Hong Seng Knitting factory in Bangkok, Thailand. They make our university apparel for Nike, and they are subjected to abuse, wage theft, and retaliation by factory management. Several concepts from the class material pertain to this situation including Class Struggle, Alienation, Commodity Fetishism, Mode of Production, Profit, Labour, Species Being, and Labour Power. I will focus on a few of the main concepts and how they contribute to the exploitation of these factory workers.

Nike and many others exploit the poorest, most desperate and often oppressed people around the world to maximize Profit for the corporation and its shareholders. That is the nature of Capitalism and is a major factor as to why many people work excessively long hours under inhumane and substandard conditions. Countries like Thailand have less stringent tax laws, a much lower standard of living, less workers' rights, more lenient or even nonexistent safety regulations and easily corruptible officials. These conditions make it easier to exploit those desperate enough to work grueling jobs like a garment factory or "sweat shop," to save on labor and other business expenditures.

Alienation involving the Hong Seng Knitting factory workers is rampant in all four main forms. They are completely alienated from the product of their labor since it is mostly being exported thousands of miles away. They are alienated from the act of production because the

work is grueling and forced by laws and conditions that work against their collective favor. It alienates their Species-Being because it essentially turns the workers into nameless drones. Finally, it alienates the workers from other workers, management and other human beings in general. Their human production, their alienated labor has turned their human essence into nothing more than a means to their existence. They earn little if any recognition for their labor, they most likely will never even see the customers who buy the products they toil for, they have no stake in their Surplus Labor and have tremendous obstacles to overcome to receive even their basic rights. The workers are mistreated so severely because they have little recourse. They are subject to harassment and intimidation from their work superiors for daring to voice their grievances at all. In this instance, their wages, their livelihood and survival, have literally been stolen from them in the form of Wage Theft. Most of the people who purchase the products of their labor likely will never know, or even care about the abuse and squalor that the workers live with. So, they, the consumer, can have cool stuff.

Unfortunately, even I am part of the problem because I have purchased a great deal of Nike products in my lifetime. I would like to help these exploited and abused workers now by spreading awareness and lobbying for change. It is the least I can do.