

“No Logo” by Naomi Klein [B2]

Dopo oltre vent’anni dalla pubblicazione, in un mondo dove il marchio personale è tutto, questa feroce critica al potere politico dei superbrand è più attuale che mai.

Naomi Klein was born in 1970 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Her Jewish family had a history of peace activism; her parents were war resisters to the Vietnam War and emigrated from the United States in 1967. As a teenager, Klein received two significant [wakeup calls](#) that opened her mind to social activism. The first was when her mother suffered a [stroke](#) and she was forced to postpone her education to help take care of her. The second was the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre in Montreal, where an antifeminist shooter murdered fourteen women and injured fourteen people.

THE VARSITY

Klein studied at the University of Toronto, where she made her first contributions to journalism with the student newspaper The [Varsity](#). At only twenty-nine, she hadn’t been out of university long when No Logo was published. Published just days after mass protests in Seattle against the 1999 [World Trade Organization](#) Ministerial Conference, the book so perfectly captured the [zeitgeist](#) that it became an immediate bestseller.

NO LOGO

Originally published under the title No Logo: [Taking Aim](#) at the [Brand](#) Bullies, the book has been published in over twenty languages. It regularly appears on university course lists and has become a standard text for political, economic and social critical analysis. The book is divided into four sections, of which the first three deal with the negative effects of brand-oriented corporate activities, while the last section discusses various [grass-roots opposition movements](#).

NO SPACE

The book begins with the history of brands, explaining how early attempts to simply make factory-produced products more recognisable were slowly replaced by the concept of selling lifestyles, particularly to the young. Until the early seventies, clothes logos were generally hidden on the inside of garments. Any small designer emblems that were visible were usually restricted to expensive golf courses and tennis courts. "In the late seventies [...] the country-club wear of the fifties became mass style for newly conservative parents and their preppy kids. Ralph Lauren's polo horseman and the Izod Lacoste's alligator escaped from the golf course and scurried into the streets, dragging the logo decisively onto the outside of the shirt." "Alla fine degli anni Settanta [...] la tenuta da circolo sportivo degli anni Cinquanta divenne stile di massa per i nuovi tradizionalisti e i loro figli studenti delle scuole private. Il giocatore di polo della Ralph Lauren e l'alligatore della Lacoste scapparono dai campi da golf e se ne andarono in giro per le strade, bene in evidenza sulle camicie."

MANIPULATIVE

These logos expressed more clearly than any price tag how much the owner was willing and able to pay for style. According to Klein, brand names such as Nike or Pepsi developed an obsession with the youth demographic which, by the 1990s, drove them to associate themselves with movie stars, athletes, grass-roots social movements and anything else young people considered cool.

NO CHOICE

Klein goes on to examine how brands use their power to limit and manipulate public choice, each company's goal being to dominate its respective field. Companies merge, forming huge conglomerations and concentrating power in the hands of the few. The result is not only an army of identically-dressed teenagers, when chains such as Walmart or Kmart force companies to change their artwork to fit in with an image, it also

impacts the products themselves. “[...] these private decisions send waves through the culture industries, affecting not just what is readily available at the local big box but what gets produced in the first place.” “[...] queste decisioni private hanno un forte impatto sull’industria della cultura, in quanto influenzano non solo ciò che è facilmente reperibile nei grandi magazzini locali, ma anche ciò che viene prodotto.”

GLOBALISATION

The third section takes a [grim](#) look at how manufacturing jobs have moved from local factories to foreign countries, and particularly to places known as [free-trade zones](#), where there may be no labour laws and poor working conditions. It also considers how the [lack](#) of manufacturing jobs in the US has led to an increase in what Klein calls the “McJob” — a precarious, short-term contract with undesirable hours and poor [compensation](#). All of this has taken place [against a backdrop](#) of huge profits for company [shareholders](#). “The economy needs steady jobs that adults can live on. And it’s clear that many people would stay in retail if it paid adult rates [...] But at the large chains, which seem at least for now to have bottomless resources to build superstores and to sink millions into expanding and synergizing their brands, the idea of paying a living wage is rarely considered.” “Il fatto è che l’economia ha bisogno di lavori stabili che consentano agli adulti di poter sopravvivere. È chiaro che molti resterebbero nel settore della vendita al dettaglio se fossero pagati da adulti [...]. Ma presso le grandi catene, che sembrano, almeno per il momento, possedere risorse infinite che gli permettono di costruire megastore e di investire milioni di dollari per espandere e incentivare le loro marche, l’idea di pagare uno stipendio decente viene raramente presa in considerazione.”

NO LOGO

The final section of the book deals with the various protests and anti-consumerist social movements that [sprang up](#) during the 1990s, such as Adbusters magazine and the [culture jamming](#) movement. Klein concludes by picturing the ubiquitous nature of advertising as a kind of military

occupation from which we must free ourselves. She goes on to [advocate](#) citizenship in place of consumerism. “It may seem like a leap — blaming one’s sneakers for a death in an Indonesian pro-democracy protest — but it did provide the connection necessary, as Lorraine Dusky writes, to see that «globalization means more than the easy exchange of currency and goods; it means that we are all our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers.»” “Imputare le proteste indonesiane pro-democrazia a un paio di scarpe da ginnastica può forse sembrare una forzatura, ma l’esempio consente di cogliere la connessione a livello umano, come scrive la Dusky, e di capire che «la globalizzazione è molto più del semplice scambio di beni e capitali e implica che tutti noi dobbiamo sorvegliare e custodire i nostri fratelli e le nostre sorelle in tutto il mondo».”

TOP 100

In 2011, Time magazine named No Logo one of the Top 100 non-fiction books published since 1923. It was so successful that, oblivious to the irony, Klein’s publisher tried to persuade her to [copyright](#) the title and logo; others even proposed a No Logo clothing line. Incredulous, Klein declined. In 2016, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize for her activism on climate justice, and she has been the co-director of the Centre for Climate Justice since 2021. Klein frequently appears on global and national lists of top influential thinkers.

Glossary

- **grass-roots opposition movements** = movimenti di opposizione popolare
- **grim** = cupo, triste
- **lack** = mancanza
- **compensation** = compenso
- **zeitgeist** = spirito del periodo, clima culturale
- **golf courses** = campi da golf
- **tennis courts** = campi da tennis
- **copyright** = registrare i diritti d'autore
- **World Trade Organization** = Organizzazione Mondiale del Commercio
- **Varsity** = università, ateneo
- **Taking Aim** = prendere la mira
- **garments** = indumenti
- **price tag** = cartellino, etichetta
- **culture jamming** = sabotaggio culturale
- **advocate** = promuovere, sostenere
- **wakeup calls** = segnali che fanno aprire gli occhi
- **Brand** = marchio, marca
- **willing and able** = disposto e in grado
- **merge** = fondersi
- **free-trade zones** = zone di libero scambio
- **against a backdrop** = sullo sfondo, in uno scenario
- **shareholders** = azionisti
- **sprang up** = sorgere
- **stroke** = ictus