

# Labor Rights, the Global Economy & Youth

Promoting youth education of global labor rights

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Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are more connected to people around the world than in previous generations. Consequently, the role that youth play as consumers has dramatically changed over the years. In an effort to bring together the issues of where our products come from and the labor rights issues associated to global supply chains, the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) has developed an opportunity for students to realize their role in ongoing globalization and the connections they have to workers around the world.

One way to concretely connect students and schools to labor rights issues is to learn more about school uniform supply chains. Unknown by many local students and consumers, school uniforms are often produced in sweatshops where workers are subjected to terrible working conditions. In addition to harmful work environments and limited rights, workers' wages may only account for 3-5% of the final retail cost of a garment. Yet, as the sale of school uniforms remains a multi-million dollar industry, workers' rights continue to be ignored.

By combining the efforts of ILRF with local schools, students will gain lessons in advocacy and ensure that their uniforms are created under acceptable conditions. **ILRF is interested in working with schools in Ward One to incorporate this into social studies and other relevant classes or after school clubs.**

## About ILRF

ILRF has been an active non-profit organization for over 20 years and continues to be a key actor in the international labor movement. In working to promote and defend workers' rights around the world, the organization is committed to bringing about change through innovative means and grassroots advocacy.



With the ultimate aim of promoting sweat-free procurement practices for school uniforms in D.C., the inclusion of youth will help students realize their potential to become influential actors in their schools. By teaching students how to take part in civic participation and effectively promote social change, this initiative will empower local youth to take action.

## **How will this fit in to the schools?**

A school can find classroom time for ILRF staff to discuss with students global labor rights with emphasis on sweatshops and child labor. This could reflect many aims of the typical social studies department, in tying students' lessons to the greater context of the international economy. Considering that both World and U.S. History courses tend to include lessons on industrialization and globalization, this seminar will allow students to apply their knowledge of these topics to relevant current issues.

In addition to an in-class seminar, students will have the opportunity to develop their own advocacy-based project through a semester long time period. Tangible goals of the seminars will include:

- A student-led fashion show of sweat-free clothing
- Research and subsequent presentation to school officials proposing ways to incorporate a sweat-free procurement plan for school uniforms

The hybrid structure of this project, of experiential learning in and outside of the classroom, will motivate students to take part. Through active involvement, students will gain core skills in research, presentation and advocacy.

## **Sustainable Lessons**

DC students who participate in this campaign will benefit by taking part in a global campaign for social justice and by participating in concrete efforts for school based policy changes. Therefore by learning how to use civic participation to effectively promote policy change, youth can develop valuable life skills all the while witnessing concrete outcomes.

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## **Join our campaign!**

Although ILRF is equipped with the resources and knowledge to carry out this sweat-free initiative, the support of local schools and communities is vital to the program's success. With the help of local partners, the results of this effort could prove to be mutually beneficial to both workers abroad and our students here in D.C.

If you are ready to become a part of this campaign or would like further information, contact:

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