

Barbara Briggs E-mail

Directions: Read this e-mail from Barbara Briggs and the National Labor Committee and answer the questions that follow. This e-mail is about how the Kathy-Lee Gifford line at Wal-Mart was discovered and what was done about it.

We were in Honduras--actually on a totally different project, researching production for the GAP--in the fall of 2005. The human rights organization we were working with asked us to meet with workers from a factory called Global Fashion. At first we said we didn't want to, because we were very small then--as now--we were completely overwhelmed with the GAP campaign, and we didn't want to get workers' hopes up if we were not in a position to do anything for them. Anyway, our partners on the ground kept insisting, so we agreed finally to meet with the workers one day at noontime, their lunch time, across the street from the factory, behind a shack that belonged to a man who was sympathetic to the workers.

We got there early, and when the workers came filing in we were really shocked because many of them were really young--clearly 13-14 years old. But then 2 guys walked in, who the workers said were spies for the factory, so we ended up doing most of the talking. But as the workers were leaving, they quietly handed us the labels they were working on--including a hang tag that said "Kathie Lee....a portion of the proceeds from the sale of this garment will be given to various children's charities." We had no idea who she was--until we got back to the U.S.--but we were struck by the irony of this person making a nice reputation for herself as someone who helps children--while children were making her clothing.

In later conversations we found out about conditions in the factory--which were terrible. We wrote several letters to her--at ABC where she then taped "Regis & Kathie Lee" every morning and through her agent. We got no response. Then one day we got a call from California Congressman George Miller's office. He was organizing hearings about the use of child labor in the production of products manufactured offshore for import into the U.S. and asked if we would like to testify.

We decided --since there had been no response at all from Kathie Lee Gifford or Wal-Mart--to focus Charlie's testimony on the Global Fashion case.

It's a long story... As you know, it turned into a very big press story. And Kathie Lee kept denying that there was a problem. So a few weeks later we brought one of the young workers, Wendy Diaz, to the U.S. to tell her story.

Here is Charles Kernaghan's testimony at the April 1996 hearing and below it, Wendy Diaz's testimony at a Congressional press conference held by Congressman Miller on May 29, 1996: <http://www.nlcnet.org/reports?id=0381>

Note that we do not ask Kathie Lee or Wal-Mart to pull production from the factory but rather to **take action to improve conditions and to move to end child labor** (in fact, even kids who are already working should not just be fired and tossed on the street. That is a disaster for them and their families. Rather, we always demand that child workers should be given a stipend to replace their wages and sent back to school, or be allowed to continue working but in accordance with the country's laws--which in Honduras means no more than 5 hours a day and never at night and with special provision for them to continue their education.