

OPEN PUBLIC LETTER TO PRESIDENT EMMERT

July 15, 2010

Dear President Emmert,

As you know, the Presidential Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing recently recommended that the University of Washington not renew its licensing contract with Nike this coming December, barring the workers receiving “the terminal compensation owed to them under Honduran law,” or arriving at a “settlement agreement” regarding this unpaid severance.¹

While the cases of the Hugger de Honduras and Vision Tex factories first came to the University of Washington’s attention before any other higher education institution in 2009, many other schools are now taking action against Nike’s violation of collegiate codes of conduct. In March 2010, the University of Wisconsin–Madison became the first university in the country to ever terminate a licensing agreement with Nike over sweatshop abuses.² Since Wisconsin’s cut, many other universities’ anti-sweatshop oversight bodies have started seriously deliberating about how to respond to Nike’s violations, including the University of California system, Indiana University, University of Maryland, Rutgers University, State University of New York system, and New York University, among others.

Additionally, just this past week Cornell University became the second school after Wisconsin to commit to cutting their contract with Nike over the Hugger and Vision Tex cases. Cornell’s President David Skorton, decided “to allow the licensing agreement to run through its expiration date of December 31, 2010,” at which point he would allow Cornell’s “agreement to expire unless significant progress is made”³ – exactly the same recommendation that the UW’s Advisory Committee on Trademarks and Licensing has made to you. President Skorton explains his decision by pointing out that he wanted “to allow Nike time to accelerate discussions...underway between the company and union,” but that he would allow the contract to expire “if Nike does not, in...an ample period of time, make satisfactory progress in bringing this matter to a conclusion.”⁴

We believe that Cornell’s commitment to not renew its Nike contract at the end of December is very significant for two reasons: it is the same course of action that ACTL recommended the UW take in early June, and Cornell will be cutting its licensing contract with Nike, without cancelling its athletics contract.⁵ Like the UW, Nike sponsors Cornell’s athletics program through an exclusive sideline agreement with the University, making Cornell’s

¹ Margaret Levi correspondence with President Emmert & ACTL, *Advice re Nike*, June 8, 2010

² University of Wisconsin–Madison News, *UW–Madison to end Nike licensing relationship*, April 9, 2010, <http://www.news.wisc.edu/17937>

³ David Skorton correspondence with Cornell Licensing Oversight Committee, *Letter from Cornell University President*, June 29, 2010

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Inside Higher Education, *Another One Bites The Dust*, July 2, 2010, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/07/02/nike>

commitment the first time a college with its sports program bankrolled by Nike, has decided to end its licensing contract with the company over labor rights violations.

President Emmert, over a year ago the University of Washington was at the forefront of higher education institutions that took strong stands against sweatshop abuses in the production of collegiate apparel. Since then, our leadership on Nike's worker rights abuses in Honduras has been eclipsed by our peers at the University of Wisconsin and Cornell, with other schools positioning themselves to take more meaningful action than us in the near future. Given Provost Wise and Regent Smith's conflicts of interest in serving on Nike's own Board of Directors, which has made the UW into a national case study of corporations undue influence at a public university, it is even more important that you follow your own committee's advice, as well as Cornell President Skorton's recent action.

As concerned students, faculty, workers and community members of the University of Washington, we respectfully request that you commit to not renewing the UW's licensing agreement with Nike this December, unless Nike reaches a settlement with the Honduran union that makes the workers of Hugger and Vision Tex whole again. A failure to do so will make a mockery out of the UW's code of conduct and past leadership on anti-sweatshop issues, and will confirm that some corporations are more equal than others, and can get away with egregious sweatshop abuses – as long as they bankroll college sports.

We look forward to hearing your response.

Respectfully,

The Undersigned

Stephanie Adler

Student Labor Action Project Representative to the Advisory Committee to Trademarks and Licensing ('09)

Bob Barnes

Co-Chair, Jobs with Justice King County Organizing Committee

Kristen Beifus

Director, WA State Fair Trade Coalition

Juan Jose Bocanegra

El Comité Pro-Reforma Migratoria y Justicia Social

Rick Bonus

Associate Professor, American Ethnic Studies UW

Heather Day

Director, Community Alliance for Global Justice

Greg Devereux
Executive Director of WFSE, State Council 28

Hala Dillsi
ASUW Director of Community Relations ('05 – '06)

Jake Faleschini
GPSS President ('08 – '10)

Angelina Snodgrass Godoy
Assistant Professor, Law, Societies and Justice and Jackson School of International Studies UW

Vinod Goswami
UFCW Local 21

James Gregory
Professor, Department of History UW

María Guillén Valdovinos
Former Chair, ASUW La Raza Commission ('08) and Women's Commission ('09)

Trevor Griffey
Co-Chair, UW Licensing Advisory Committee ('07 – '08)

Rick Hoffman
King County Labor Council

Eunice How
Co-Chair, Jobs with Justice King County Organizing Committee

Steve Lansing
UFCW Local 21

Nick Licata
Seattle City Councilmember

Ashley Miller
ASUW Vice-President ('06)

James Metheny
Seattle Housing and Resource Effort

Lonnie Nelson
Mothers for Police Accountability

David Parsons

President, UAW Local 4121

Pride at Work, King County Chapter

Connie Rodriguez
Laborers International Union

Ileana Rodriguez-Silva
Associate Professor, History UW

Andrew Schwartz
ASUW Representative to the Advisory Committee to Trademarks and Licensing ('09)

Matthew Sparke
Professor, Geography Department and Jackson School of International Studies UW

Jeff Stevens
GPSS Secretary ('05)

United Auto Workers Local 4121 E-Board

David Parsons, President
Jessica Pikul, Vice President
Evette Jasper, Financial Secretary
Dylan Mayer, Recording Secretary
Phil Harding, Trustee
Jean Dinh, Trustee
Steven Beda, Sergeant-at-Arms

Services Employees International Union Local 925, UW Chapter

SweatFree Washington

United Students Against Sweatshops, Seattle Organizing Committee

UW Student Labor Action Project

UW SweatFree Coalition

Washington State Fair Trade Coalition

Washington State Jobs with Justice, King County Organizing Committee

Yecelica Valdivia
Former Chair, ASUW La Raza Commission ('07) and Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgender
Commission ('08)