

# SweatFreeCommunities

**A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops**  
**www.sweatfree.org**

November 7, 2006

## Board Members

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United Students Against Sweatshops

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Ethan Orlinsky, Senior Vice President and General Counsel  
Major League Baseball Properties  
245 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10167

Dear Mr. Orlinsky,

We are writing in response to your letter to Mr. Tim Stevens and Mr. Kenneth Miller on October 16, 2006 to encourage mutual pro-active and constructive steps promoting the welfare of workers who produce Major League Baseball Properties licensed goods.

SweatFree Communities supports and coordinates a national network of grassroots campaigns seeking to convince public, religious, and private institutions to adopt sweatshop-free purchasing and licensing policies in order to generate significant market demand for products made in humane conditions by workers who are paid living wages. Sweatfree campaigns, such as the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance (PASCA), create diverse community coalitions committed to local action for human rights in workplaces in the United States and abroad.

Acting as large consumers, governments, schools, and sports teams can compel companies that benefit from public or private contracts to adhere to fair labor standards. Over 170 school districts, cities, counties, and states in the United States already have adopted sweatfree procurement policies, including the City of Pittsburgh and the State of Pennsylvania. Over 150 colleges and universities have committed to genuinely independent monitoring of their licensees' supplier factories. By learning from these efforts to work pro-actively for a world without sweatshop abuse, Major League Baseball can set a new standard for human decency in the sports arena and positively impact the lives of workers in the United States and around the world.

PASCA has taken a leading role promoting universities' anti-sweatshop licensing standard to baseball and other sports. SweatFree Communities has supported PASCA's work to educate the Pittsburgh community and build a partnership with the Pittsburgh Pirates to improve working conditions in factories that produce Pirates and other MLBP-licensed goods. We have posted educational and advocacy material on our website, including a proposed anti-sweatshop resolution and correspondence between PASCA, the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Major League Baseball.

Your October 16 letter to Mr. Stevens and Mr. Miller addresses some of the case material we have posted on our website, investigations pertaining to Rawlings, adidas, Reebok, and Nike. We are glad that you took the time to research

these cases, but do not share your apparent conclusion that they are not relevant to the case at hand.

We are not surprised that you have learned from Rawlings that present-day conditions in the Costa Rican factory subject to the 2004 National Labor Committee investigation are nothing like they were at that time. Indeed, the purpose of the investigation was precisely to spur the improvements in the working conditions that you document. That said, we also caution against relying on companies' investigations of their own or their contractors' labor practices in order to avoid conflict of interest. If Rawlings' report to you were based on a thorough investigation by a competent third-party not-for-profit independent factory monitor with no ties to the company or the industry beyond the monitoring relationship it would be more credible. We would be pleased to hear from you that this indeed is the case.

In regard to the Oxfam 2006 and Clean Clothes Campaign 2006 reports, we did not claim that they pertained to MLB licensed apparel. Again, we are glad that you took the time to investigate these reports and any possible connection to MLB licensed products, but the fact that you found no such connections does not mean that these reports should not be of concern to Major League Baseball. The reports do concern MLB licensees and it is their sourcing practices as much as their contractors' labor practices that are at issue.

In general, the reports we cite indicate that human and worker rights violations in contractor factories is a serious and persistent issue for MLB licensees such as Rawlings, adidas, and Nike despite a decade or more of company efforts to improve working conditions by monitoring contractors' adherence to codes of conduct. In our view, your July 7 letter to Mr. Tim Stevens expressed too great confidence in the mechanisms now in place to ensure that MLB licensed goods are produced in humane environments (for example: *"...whenever we have been told that a licensee has engaged in wrongful or improper behavior of any kind, including actions involving their employees, we have investigated each of these accusations and, in each instance, are pleased to report that we have never found any legitimate basis for these claims."*) As Scott Nova, Executive Director of the Worker Rights Consortium, notes in his July 10 letter to Kevin McClatchy and the Pittsburgh Pirates, *"While some or all of your licensees may have labor rights compliance programs in place, it is not necessarily safe to assume that these programs are 1) sufficiently effective in ensuring that proper wages and working conditions are maintained in Third World production facilities, and 2) structured in such a way as to be credible to baseball fans and the general public."* We note on our website that even some licensees themselves admit serious and chronic human rights violations in most of their factory base, referring to Nike's own report about their supply chain. Indeed, the evidence of widespread human rights abuses in the global apparel industry is so compelling that on the day of the All-Start Game in Pittsburgh, July 11, 2006, the City of Pittsburgh adopted a proclamation urging *"all organizations that are part of the Pittsburgh community to commit themselves to eliminating the use and sale of products that were produced in sweatshop conditions"* because *"sweatshop conditions, which include poverty wages, forced overtime, unsafe working conditions, firings and blacklisting in response to attempts to organize unions, mandatory pregnancy tests, firings for pregnancy, and other violations of women's rights, are so widespread in the apparel industry that they could be considered the norm and not the exception"* (emphasis added).

If sweatshop abuse is the norm for the apparel industry, it is unlikely that Major League Baseball is immune from this problem. It is in this context we hope that you hear comments about Major League Baseball licensees or contractors engaging sweatshop labor. We concur with Mr. Tim Stevens (October 31 letter) that no party is intending to disseminate false information or injure the reputation of Major League Baseball as a good public citizen. But we also believe that Major League Baseball is not yet doing all it can do

to improve working conditions in factories that make MLB licensed goods around the world. We urge you not to wait for an investigatory report by a human rights organization exposing human rights violations in factories that make such goods. There is enough evidence of sweatshop abuse in the industry in general for Major League Baseball to consider strengthening mechanisms to ensure human decency in supplier factories.

Community partnerships such as that between PASCA and the Pittsburgh Pirates can help address the problems in the global apparel supply chain, linking community members and workers. SweatFree Communities would also be glad to be of assistance as you consider additional steps to improve working conditions in factories producing MLB licensed goods.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bjorn Claeson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bjorn" and last name "Claeson" clearly distinguishable.

Bjorn Claeson  
Executive Director

cc: Kevin McClatchy  
Tim Stevens  
Kenneth Miller