

USAS | united students against sweatshops



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June 14, 2010

Steve Jobs
Chief Executive Officer
Apple Inc.
1 Infinite Loop
Cupertino, CA 95014

Sent via facsimile and email

Dear Mr. Jobs,

I am writing on behalf of United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) concerning serious worker rights violations at Apple's supplier factory operated by Foxconn in Shenzhen, China. USAS is the nation's largest campus-based student organization dedicated to supporting workers' rights. Our members operate through a nationwide network of over 150 college and high school chapters.

This past year, USAS led a successful international campaign against Russell Athletic, America's leading athletic apparel provider, which is owned by Berkshire Hathaway. Our campaign organized students in the United States, Canada and Great Britain to terminate clothing contracts with Russell. We were also able to encourage retailers such as the Sports Authority and JC Penney to stop doing business with Russell. These factors motivated Russell to reopen a unionized garment factory in Honduras, rehire 1,200 union employees, and agree to a multi-million dollar payout to workers for damages. The campaign marked the largest university boycott of a corporation in the history of student activism, and cost Russell tens of millions of dollars in lost collegiate and other retail business.

We are alarmed at the history of worker rights violations at the Shenzhen factory of Apple manufacturer Foxconn. The shocking recent string of at least 11 worker deaths, by both suicide and exhaustion, are only the latest symptoms of severe irresponsibility in Apple's supply chain. For years labor watchdogs and advocates in China, including our partners Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM), have insisted that Apple stop Foxconn's worker violations, and Apple chose to ignore the problem. At their Shenzhen plant, Foxconn paid workers 900 yuan a month, wages so low that workers were compelled to work as much as 100 hours in overtime each month – nearly triple the maximum limit under Chinese law. The recent raise to 1200 yuan is no sign of positive reform given that Foxconn expects Shenzhen to raise its minimum wage to this same amount soon.

Perhaps most disturbing are your recent comments in which you have denied the seriousness of the situation for workers making Apple products in Shenzhen. We were surprised when you dismissed the factory's sweatshop conditions and even said, "for a factory, it's pretty

nice,”¹ and we were even more disappointed when you shrugged off responsibility for the worker suicides by claiming Foxconn employees' suicide rate is still below average.² Such comments make us question your company's willingness to take responsibility for worker rights in your supply chain and proactively address problems. This approach, in light of the dire situation unfolding recently, is simply unacceptable to the leadership of USAS and the thousands of students with whom we work.

USAS urges Apple to address the problems in Shenzhen by ensuring payment of living wages, legal working hours, and democratic union elections in Foxconn supplier factories.

United Students Against Sweatshops is anxious to see the Shenzhen workers making Apple products achieve an end to sweatshop working conditions and to elect a democratic union. We would appreciate your prompt response to these important issues, in order to inform what steps, if necessary, USAS' student network and our allies will take. We hope that you will make every effort necessary to end sweatshop conditions at Foxconn and allow a democratic union, so that we can offer our congratulations to both you and the workers in Shenzhen.

Sincerely,



Jack Mahoney
National Organizer
United Students Against Sweatshops

cc:

Robert Bainbridge, Director of Supplier Social Responsibility, Apple Inc.
Debby Chan Sze Wan, Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior
Jenny Chan, Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior
Alex T. Tom, Executive Director, San Francisco Chinese Progressive Alliance
Scott Nova, Executive Director, Worker Rights Consortium
United Students Against Sweatshops Coordinating Committee

1 “For a factory, it's pretty nice”: Apple boss Steve Jobs defends conditions at Chinese factory where 10 workers have jumped to their deaths”, Daily Mail, 2nd June 2010, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1283389/Apple-boss-Steve-Jobs-defends-China-Foxconn-factory-conditions-10-suicides.html>

2 “Steve Jobs Email Conversation About Foxconn Suicides”, Mac Stories, 1st June 2010, <http://www.macstories.net/stories/steve-jobs-email-conversation-about-foxconn-suicides/>