

University

Exposing Victoria's dirty little secret

by Paige Hiemark

Penn State has a collegiate clothing contract with Victoria's Secret, which in turn, works with a manufacturing company that uses sweatshop labor to produce the trendy Penn State-labeled sweatpants, tees and hoodies seen on girls throughout campus.

The Collegiate Licensing Company closed a deal in July, 2008 allowing PINK, a loungewear division of Victoria's Secret, to use the name and logo of 33 universities, including Penn State. The deal allows the company to sell in stores and online PINK clothing that is embellished with the Penn State name and logo.

The contract was finalized about seven months after the exposure of deplorable working conditions in one of the Jordanian factories where PINK clothing is manufactured.

Penn State and Limited Brands, the holding company of Victoria's Secret, both assert that none of their clothing is manufactured using any sort of sweatshop labor, but, according to the Business and Human

The laborers work 14 to 15 hours a day and are forced to sew one bikini every 3.3 minutes, the committee asserts.

Rights Resource Center and Women's Wear Daily, the conditions in the Limited Brands factories qualify them as sweatshops.

Limited Brands said that in 2007 it "worked with the National Labor Committee, [its] vendor and the Jordanian government to resolve the short and long term challenges identified by the National Labor Committee and Jordanian Government including education, training and support services."

The Victoria's Secret factory is operated by DK Garments and employs 150 workers from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Workers are not provided with documents allowing

them to live and work in Jordan so they cannot leave the factory park for fear of imprisonment, according to The National Labor Committee.

The laborers work 14 to 15 hours a day and are forced to sew one bikini every 3.3 minutes, the committee asserts. The workers live in small fenced-in dorms that have no hot water or heat.

Limited Brands says in its labor statement that vendors must "comply with the law," pay more than minimum wage and benefits, allow freedom of association and abstain from forced labor. DK Garments, however, directly violates each of these Limited Brands requirements, the committee reported.

PINK refused to divulge any information about the licensing agreement to Widad Tourki, one of three PINK representatives at Penn State.

Penn State Licensing Department representative Maureen Riedel refused to answer questions regarding how much the contract between Penn State and Victoria's Secret is worth. Riedel did say, however, that



Photo by Stephanie Luong
Victoria's Secret PINK product line is reportedly produced in Jordanian sweatshops.

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Groundwater: Centre County's blue gold

by Hannah Abelbeck

Some Penn State students used Oct. 14 to "Take Back the Tap," hosting a day-long series of events to encourage students to reduce bottled water use, culminating with a documentary screening and a panel discussion.

Environment, Ecology, and Education, which calls itself 3E-COE, showed "Blue Gold: World Water Wars," a 2008 documentary directed by Sam Bozzo and based on a book by Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke. The movie was followed by a panel featuring Robert Brooks, Penn State geography professor specializing in wetlands, and Lydia Vandenberg, sustainability officer for Penn State's Office of Physical Plant.

3E-COE wants Penn State to drastically reduce its consumption of bottled water and is petitioning Penn State to end its contract

with Pepsi for selling Aquafina on campus. As educators, the members of 3E-COE believe informing students about water consumption would help reduce demand for bottled water.

The water in a 20-ounce bottle of Aquafina from a campus vending machine costs \$9.60 per gallon. Water from the fountain down the hall probably costs Penn State less than the national average of \$.002 per gallon, the group estimated. The biggest difference is not in the quality of the water, but in the manufacturing, bottling, transportation and marketing of bottled water and in the profit that companies make from it, participants said.

All campus water is groundwater drawn from five wells in the limestone under the Centre County watershed and tested regularly to meet Environmental Protection Agency guidelines. The water quality reports are available on the Office of

Physical Plant Web site. The university uses 775 million gallons a year according to Vandenberg. It has reduced use from more than 1 billion gallons.

According to the Spring Creek Watershed Community Water Resources Monitoring Project, the water system that fills Penn State's wells lies beneath 175 square miles of Centre County. Underground, water can travel about 15 miles, filtering through the barrens in Pennsylvania State Game Lands 176 in Patton Township, passing under State College, and resurfacing at Bellefonte's Big Spring. Big Spring is the second largest spring in Pennsylvania and supplies public drinking water to Bellefonte and Milesburg.

Local groundwater is hard because it dissolves calcium and magnesium from the underground limestone as it passes through. Water hardness is not regulated by the EPA or Food and Drug Administration, and in

July the Pocono Record discovered Dasani water sold in Stroudsburg still qualifies as hard water. It also found pH or alkalinity irregularities in bottles from Aquafina, Dasani and Fiji.

Bottled water companies aren't required to test for Bisphenol A or BPA, even though studies have shown that exposing plastic bottles to heat can cause them to leach the harmful chemical faster than normal. Since bottled water is often transported by truck or warehoused in storage facilities, consumers have little information about the quality of the water when it is bottled or when it reaches them.

Bottled water has a hidden environmental impact, since the water is repackaged by companies in polyethylene terephthalate or PET plastic bottles and trucked to

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Common sense should trump political correctness

by Jaimie Campbell

The enemy of diversity isn't racism or sexism. The enemy of diversity is something far more heinous — political correctness.

Think about it for a moment. In some cases, political correctness requires excessive levels of concern for another's feelings. The "PC" conversation says a lot without saying anything you mean. It's similar to giving out the participant ribbon at the end of an event; you get a ribbon, and don't feel bad even though you did not win. But when you know you are going to get a ribbon anyway, do you work as hard? Do you continue to have an honest straight-forward conversation about diversity with a person that you know will disagree with every point?

You do, if someone pushes you.

We have become so worried about hurting another's feelings that we have sacrificed truth. People are not concerned anymore with getting to the heart of the matter. They are more worried about what people will think of them. How can you learn about another culture, idea or even religion if you are afraid to ask any questions and have honest discussions? I've heard people say

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"licensees producing Penn State products are doing so under the guidelines, policies and requirements that the university has established" and that Penn State is "committed to ensuring products are produced under fair and humane working conditions ... [and licensees are manufactured] in accordance with Penn State's labor code requirements."

Penn State took a step away from sweatshop labor in February by being the third school in the Big 10 to boycott Russell Athletic, a clothing company that closed down several factories after newly-formed unions tried to bargain collectively with management to obtain clean water and to stop verbal abuse.

One of PINK's main focuses is its project Hope. Hope is the umbrella term used to encompass PINK's plan to make Victoria's Secret a "company with a



that they want to be "PC" because they do not want to be seen as a racist or bigot. Trust me, as a person of color, I know when someone has crossed the line. Most people of color, with the exception of a few, know when someone is being openly racist. We also know when someone is asking a question out of curiosity or just because they are clueless about interactions with other cultures. Those persons of color with "CS" (read common sense) understand how to work with those questions and answer them.

Every now and then, I watch the news channels and listen to the local programs. I constantly find myself wondering, "Do these people know anyone whose ideas and thoughts slightly differ from theirs?" The thing is, I have never called or wrote to any of these programs. Why? Call it fear, call it doubt, call it pride or simply call it what it is — I just didn't want to be bothered. I love to talk, trust me. But I also know when I am going to get a fair ear, and due to my fear of

conscience." According to Tourki, one facet of the Hope project is to create Hope initiatives. These initiatives aim to better the world by having on-campus representatives choose a charitable cause to devote themselves to. The initiatives can be anything from stopping global warming to ending cruelty to animals; the only requirement is that the representatives must integrate PINK products into events and actions designed to further their own chosen initiative. Tourki says the Penn State PINK initiative is "combating global warming," so the three campus representatives distribute PINK refillable water containers in hopes that people will stop buying bottled water and hence reduce atmospheric carbon.

PINK consumer confusion is perhaps summed up best on the PINK Web site itself. There is a Hope board where PINK customers post and rank different "hopes." Two of the most highly rated "hopes" are for "the world to become a better and safer place" and "free PINK clothes!"

falling into a "PC" conversation, I don't call. To listen to others tear down my ideas or to be put on mute by a host that I might get the better of is too much for me. So, in order to avoid frustration or appearance as the over-emotional person of color, I don't call.

Some racists will never admit their feelings of fear and hatred toward those that are different. In fact they are often quite offended when confronted. However, you don't beat them with emotion — you beat them with logic until there is only the truth of their ignorance. You do this because the first thing that a racist often says is that people of color are too sensitive. The truth of

the matter is that people from a diverse background are not too sensitive. We just tend to identify and confront racism when we see it. When that happens, a real discussion can take place.



I am not saying it is going to be easy, but this is the only way that racist and bigots can be beaten. Being disinterested about what they think as they are confronted will help us all lose the need for political correctness and give these subjects on racism the dialogue and openness deserved.

Let us agree to go with common sense over political correctness so we can get things right.

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retail locations. The manufacturing process uses three times more water than the bottle holds, and the oil needed for the bottle and its transportation would fill one fourth of it.

Bottled water companies have been using images of "natural" white glaciers, pristine forests, hidden mountain lakes and exotic locales for years to entice consumers. Yet, only in 2007 did Pepsi finally reveal that the water in Aquafina bottles came from public water supplies.

The authors of Blue Gold say that "the human race has taken water for granted and massively misjudged the capacity of the earth's water systems to recover from our carelessness. Part of the challenge is viewing the problem locally and globally at the same time, especially when almost one quarter of bottled water crosses national borders before reaching consumers.

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Dwindling supplies of clean, fresh water caused by water pollution, overpopulation and water misuse are widely seen as an emerging global problem. The movie connects this resource crisis to the effort of multinational corporations—the companies that have created labels such as Perrier, Evian, Dasani and Aquafina—to secure water rights and create a monopoly for their products.

The movie asks viewers whether access to clean, safe, drinkable water is a human right or whether water is a commodity that should be privatized and sold to make a profit. When the filmmakers look at Mexico, a country where Coca Cola has a

near monopoly, they catch a Coca Cola executive lying about why a glass bottle of Coke costs significantly less than water bottled by the company in a smaller plastic container.

Multinational corporations and people who don't have access to safe water clearly understand its importance and value, but most Americans give it little thought.

Nationally, consolidation of bottled water plant ownership occurred five to 10 years ago. The Milesburg facility used to belong to AquaPenn, which was bought out by Danone in 1998, and fully transferred to CCDA Waters LLC in 2002. While the competition for market share has kept

prices low, the companies hope that ultimately manufacturers will be able to charge more.

But bottled water companies' biggest competitor is public water. In late 2008 through 2009, environmental activism and the troubled economy have dented bottled water sales for the first time after a decade of steady growth.

Drinking water only makes up a small portion of water use.

"With more than 1 billion people around the globe still lacking access to a safe and reliable source of water, the \$100 billion the world spends on bottled water every year could certainly be put to better use creating and maintaining safe public water infrastructure everywhere," reported the The Earth Policy Institute.

Brooks emphasized that "it takes a lot of vigilance" to care for something as big and complex as a water system. Getting involved is important, and "wisdom is asking questions."



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