

## **Discounting Women: Wal-Mart's Corporate Abuses Here and Abroad**

Take action on Wal-Mart's unfair practices that target women both domestically and overseas! Wal-Mart is the largest private employer in the world with over \$10 billion in profits, yet it continues to allow sex discrimination in pay, promotion, and compensation, wage abuse, exclusion of contraceptive coverage in insurance plans, and violations of labor laws resulting in sweatshop conditions. Help hold Wal-Mart accountable to workers and the communities it affects both here and abroad by joining forces with two new campaigns this fall!

### **Partner Organizations and Contacts:**

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### **Background Information:**

During Wal-Mart's ascent to dominance as the world's largest and richest retailer, the corporation has demonstrated that they value profits over people's lives. Wal-Mart is always looking for ways to further shave down their "Always Low Prices;" but what is the true cost of this race to the bottom? The FMF encourages campus groups to educate on and organize around the issue of Wal-Mart's poor treatment of women thousands of miles away as well as in their own communities.

In the mid-90s, there was public outcry when it was discovered that Kathie Lee Gifford's Wal-Mart clothing line was made in sweatshops. Although Wal-Mart pledged to rid its shelves of sweatshop-produced clothing after that PR nightmare, it seems as though the situation has grown worse. Independent investigations into the company's practices, coupled with a whistle-blowing former management-level employee in one of its Central American factories, are putting Wal-Mart in the hot seat once more. Across the world, evidence of low wages and poor treatment has surfaced, even as the corporate behemoth amasses billions of dollars in profits.

However, you do not have to travel far to find Wal-Mart exploiting women and treating them as second-class citizens. Right here in America, there is ample evidence of questionable practices. Wal-Mart is presently facing a historic class-action lawsuit, with over 2 million current and former employees charging the company with gender discrimination; these women claim that Wal-Mart systematically fails to pay and promote women. Furthermore, the massive chain refuses to cover contraceptives in its employee health care plan, and does not stock emergency contraception (EC). Although the company's spokesperson claims that the decision not to stock EC stems from purely business factors, it appears that Wal-Mart seeks to undermine women's reproductive rights and health.

Wal-Mart's treatment of women must be stopped, and the movement is just getting started. Numerous organizations are on the verge of a major mobilization effort this fall and beyond to challenge the dominance of Wal-Mart's corporate empire. Check out the organizations mentioned in the Take Action section and see what each of them has to offer your group!

## Take Action to End Wal-Mart's Abuse of Women!

### *Get Involved with National Organizations Highlighting Wal-Mart's Corporate Abuses*

The **Wake Up Wal-Mart Campaign** ([www.wakeupwalmart.com](http://www.wakeupwalmart.com)), launched April 5<sup>th</sup>, is one of the fastest growing organizations in the country, with nearly 70,000 supporters and activists engaged in on-the-ground actions every day. Their goal is to give the company's consumers the tools to empower themselves to change Wal-Mart's practices and force the company to become a responsible employer and retailer. By adopting a store and becoming a Leader of Change, you will work to create a community coalition around your Wal-Mart and participate in a variety of upcoming activities!

Working closely with Wake Up Wal-Mart is **Wal-Mart Watch** ([www.walmartwatch.com](http://www.walmartwatch.com)), which launched in 2005. A virtual clearinghouse for research and information about the company and its detrimental practices at home and abroad, Wal-Mart Watch is dedicated to making Wal-Mart a responsible corporate citizen and holding it accountable to its employees and host communities. This fall, the group is launching a program targeting college campuses and has full-time staff available to help your group strategize; Wal-Mart Watch offers a Campus Organizing Toolkit that details educational information and actions to galvanize the student body and the greater community.

### *Additional Action Ideas for Raising Awareness on Your Campus*

- **Plug into your local community's activism** around Wal-Mart by forming relationships with local and regional organizers. Set up a meeting with the local group and discuss the most helpful way for your group to get involved, whether it be raising funds, writing letters, circulating petitions, and/or supporting ballot initiatives through phone calls or community canvassing.
- Table with fact sheets from the websites or stage unique actions to let people know about Wal-Mart's practices that harm women. **One example of a creative organizing tool is a "burma shave."** Create a short phrase or slogan like "Wal-Mart Discriminates Against Women" or "Wal-Mart Is Not Wanted Here," and clearly print one word per poster or foam board, so it can be read from a distance. Stand along a busy stretch of road on your campus or in the community, so people will read your slogan as they drive by.
- Educate students about Wal-Mart's practices and encourage them to shop elsewhere! Wake Up Wal-Mart's "**Send Wal-Mart 'Back To School' Campaign**" encourages people to shop for the bulk of their goods at community-owned and smaller-scale retailers at the beginning of the school year. Give information about this campaign to first years and their parents on move-in day or during the first couple of days on campus. Wake Up Wal-Mart is planning to hold a similar action in the winter months to promote buying gifts at alternative stores during the big holiday shopping season.
- Participate in the **Wal-Mart Week of Action, November 13-19**, by planning events on campus and in your community, which can include screening "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price" on your campus ([www.walmartmovie.com](http://www.walmartmovie.com))! In November, Robert Greenwald, known for the Fox News expose "Outfoxed," will release this documentary detailing the struggle of ordinary people as they challenge the resources and power of the Wal-Mart behemoth.
- Contact community activists and professors on campus to participate in **a speaker series about Wal-Mart** to educate your fellow students. For more information about planning this type of event, email [info@walmartwatch.com](mailto:info@walmartwatch.com).
- **Connect to other organizations** focusing on Wal-Mart such as your local or state NOW chapter, a United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) campus chapter, or a Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) group.