

# Worker advocates and documents publish

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Walter, Nikkei, and Apple have been ousted as continuing to practice unreasonable labor standards internally and outside the country, and are only brought to light when incidents or tragedies occur. This following paper will examine several cases of unfair labor practices brought against companies, the results, and the recourse that followed from public view.

Apple has become one of the biggest, richest and most successful companies in the world. The company has achieved a pace of innovation that is nearly unmatched in modern history. But with this innovation and pace come acquisitions of unfair labor practices that happen outside the country in China.

According to an article published in the N. Y. Times (Barbara, Digging 201 2) workers assembling phones, pads and other devices often labor in harsh conditions, according to employees inside those plants, worker advocates and documents published by companies themselves. These unfair labor practices have shoved Apple in the forefront of recent headlines describing many disturbing practices. Incidents and reports are varied but many cases have been reported of the mental and physical health of their errors is often overlooked. Reports of workers living in crowded dorms and working longer hours than usual have also been reported on numerous occasion. Factory safety conditions have also been reported to be low with little regard to worker safety in China facilities.

“ There have been multiple explosions reported in Apples supplier facilities. Workers were also asked to use n-hexane, a toxic chemical, to clean phone screen in order to enhance the speed of the production process” (Apple’s

Supply Chain: Sacrificing Fair Labor Practices to Build Your Fancy phone, 2012). Multiple reported suicides at Apple's supplier plant in Foxing, China have also been reported.

Apple was again blasted for their "ethical and legal" labor violations at another China part supplier plant as recently as 2013. A watchdog group called Chic Labor watch reported that the Wax manufacturing plant of Cabal Circuit Inc. Has "failed to pay workers millions of dollars in overtime wages, demanded 100 hours of mandatory overtime pay per month, required more than 11 hours a day of standing work with no rest and numerous other violations" (Seasick, 2013). Apple has denied many of these findings delivering data and audits that contradict many of these findings. In a statement issued by Apple in July 2013 in response to the report by the China Labor Watch the stated "Apple is committed to providing safe and fair working condition throughout our supply chain. We lead the industry with far-reaching and specialized audits" (Gonzalez, 2014). Apple has seemed to experience little recourse from all the publicity of unfair practices, and only time will tell if the allegations will stop or more will be brought to light. Nikkei Corporation has several times been in the headlines for unfair labor practices and the welfare of the employees.

Since 1990 Nikkei has faced a barrage of criticism from activist, media, and other for human rights violations. In Indonesia, where Korean suppliers owned a majority of Nikkei factories, several cases of human right abuses were revealed by nongovernmental organizations (Farrell, Farrell, Frederica, 2008). Another of Nike's problems were focused on factory conditions in

Vietnam where audits were conducted and unacceptable human conditions were reported. Both conditions were reported a major news networks and N. Y. Times articles.

Nikkei had long been accused of unfair labor practices in third world countries where many of their factories are located. The National Labor Committee slammed the company back in 2000 accusing the organization Of “ working workers for 1 6 hour days, seven days a week, paying those workers 41 cents per hours, sleeping them in dorm rooms packed 12 employees per room, and feeding them only two meals a day” (Labor slams Nikkei for unfair labor practice, 2000). Recently a factory in Indonesia that makes sneakers for Nikkei agreed to pay \$1 million in overtime to 4, 500 workers.

Jim Keyed, a workers rights advocate worked with the union to initiate a lawsuit against the company. The lawsuit was payment for forcing workers to work extra hours with pay, a practice that has been going on for almost two decades according to Keyed (Nikkei to pay Indonesian Workers \$1 Million, 2012). Keyed also went on record to state that his advocate organization has been focusing of Nine’s treatment of workers in Indonesia for the past 14 years and helped expose Nine’s use of child labor in the sass’s. He also commented that although conditions in Nikkei factories have improved in the last decade, “ wages remain stagnant at less than \$1 50 month and the company is still not willing to directly engage the union on unfair or unsafe labor conditions” (Nikkei to Pay Indonesian Workers \$1 Million, 2012). Nikkei

was one company that faced many repercussions from the allegations brought to the public.

Stemming from the child labor allegations and unfair work practices universities began canceling their deals with Nike to produce their athletic goods. In 1998 Nike revenue and stock prices decreased by approximately 50 percent, leading to them laying off 1,600 workers. The company spent almost a decade to restore their tarnished image, and although many report that Nike's practices have improved, there are still reports of unfair treatment in their off-shore factories. Though unfair labor practices are many times shown to be outside the country, we still have many cases that happen internally within country. In many cases Nike has been accused of practicing unfair labor standards in all their retail stores throughout the United States. According to an article written by Bryce Covert and published on the website Think Progress Nike has recently been downgraded in market rating. " Nike was lowered from a " market perform" rating to an " underperformed" rating, citing three main causes: underpayment, and erosion of its price advantage against competitors, and costs associated with intensifying pressure from workers organizing" (Covert, 2014).

Nike has long been under the scrutiny of underpaying employees and is infamous for its unfair labor laws and employment practices. In 2013 the company reported a net income of over \$11 billion dollars, but also synonymous with great profits come allegations in regards to wage law location, inadequate health care, exploitation and their anti-union stance. In June of 2013, workers and labor activists staged hundreds of protests at Wall-

Mart store in many major cities across the U. S. , including the Bay Area, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis and Washington, demanding pay increases and better working conditions. (Evolve, 2014). After the protests many employees reported that Walter intimidated and disciplined workers involved in these protests.

One of the most serious charges involved Carlton Smith, a 17-year employee at Walter in Paramount, CA, who began speaking out when he noticed the store was taking a turn for the worse. Employees were struggling with low wages, less hours, and poor healthcare, while the store suffered with untidy practices and poor customer service. Carlton participated in the protest in response to unfair labor practices and led a delegation at his store to ask management to address workers concerns. Several months after the incident Walter terminated him on pretext of lacking performance- even though he had been recently named Associate of the Month.

In response to these practices OUR Walter which is a non-union representation of Walter workers filed 30 counts of unfair labor practice with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The representations alleged “widespread and egregious attempts by Walter to silence the workers who have been calling for a change of course at the company” (Our Walter files over 30 New Counts of Unfair Labor Practices Against Walter for Attempts to Silence Associates, 2013). These cases will likely take years to decide, while Walter will continue to thrive in the retail industry.