

Free book review on where am i wearing : a global tour to the countries, factorie...

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And People that Make Our Clothes

The paper is a book review of *Where Am I Wearing?*, a book written by Kelsey Timmerman. The book describes the adventures Timmerman had when he decided to travel to all the factories that had made his clothes. Timmerman describes how he went to Honduras to see where his T-shirt was made, to Bangladesh to see where his underwear was made (23), to Cambodia to see where his jeans were made (107), to China to see where his flip-flops were made (163), and finally to Perry, New York in the United States to see where his shorts were made (226). He did this to see the factories, meet the workers, and understand more about the global clothing industry.

But Timmerman is not someone who studies the global economy or even wants to protest poor worker conditions in sweatshops. Some people may say he is not qualified to write this book. Instead he is an ordinary guy who is very curious. By being curious he learned that the world clothing industry is complicated and there are no easy answers to solving the problems he saw. Although Timmerman may not have the background of other authors writing about the global economy, he told interesting stories that change everyday clothes and the countries on their tags into something more meaningful. One purpose of the book was to introduce the lives of workers around the world who made clothing. Timmerman was very good at figuring out ways to meet with the workers and learn about their lives. Many of the workers were separated from their families and sent the money back to them to support them. They were also often living and working in poor conditions, especially when compared to the living and working conditions in the United States.

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They were also paid much less. But that is the reason why the clothing is being made there and that allows customers to buy the clothing for bargain prices. Timmerman often said that while it was the workers role in life to make the clothing, it was his role to buy them and neither could play their roles without the other (200). Because any change in one role would bring about a change in the other, it was difficult to address problems in the clothing industry.

A problem discussed in the book was child labor (Timmerman 53-58).

Timmerman had a hard time deciding whether the ban on child labor was ultimately a good thing, especially in Bangladesh and Cambodia. That is because the children there had no school to go to and if they weren't working, they would be begging on the street or picking for trash in horrible garbage heaps. Strict child labor laws did fill the street with children.

Although working long hours in dangerous factories was not good, having some work could be better than being on the street. By working they could at least bring in money to help support their families.

It is not easy to read about children in such a bad situation and there seems no solution. But Timmerman did discuss the work of Bibi Russell, a former model who has dedicated her life to getting Bangladesh weavers into the global market (70-71), a bank that makes very small loans, as small as \$5, to disadvantaged women in Bangladesh (72-74), and the work of Scott Neeson, a Hollywood producer who moved to Cambodia and established the Cambodia Children's Fund to rescue children from the dump (146). Actions like this begin to address the problem.

One of the most interesting parts of the book was the discussion surrounding

China, where Timmerman learned how his flip-flops were made (163). There he met a couple that worked together in the shoe factory due to debt they had from building a house in the country. But they had to leave that house and their son home there in the country with his grandfather to work (189). Although they had better living conditions, shorter hours per day, and higher pay than many of the other workers in the book, they often had to work for free if a big order was due. They also had to work with no days off for many weeks at a time. Because of this, they had not seen their son in several years. Timmerman traveled to their country home, bringing a picture of the parents to their son. Then he traveled back to the city and delivered a picture of the son to the parents. Timmerman said that the strangest thing of all was the general resignation and lack of complaints about the situation (170). This could be because of the power of the government in China and generations of people having no voice to complain.

The later sections of the book become more personal where Timmerman talks about his family and his wedding (219). Interesting, his grandmother once worked in a clothing factory. The wedding he describes sounds very nice and he even takes his new wife to a factory in New York as part of their honeymoon. There he finally succeeds in his initial quest of actually meeting someone who had sewn an article of his clothing. He meets the woman who had sewn the shorts that he had owned for sixteen years (229). Although she now worked for different company, she was at the same factory run by a new owner. In a different version of problems than those seen in other parts of the world, but common for the United States, almost all of the workers she had worked with had been laid off. By including a factory in the United States

that had been through layoffs, Timmerman included this part of the clothing industry story in his book.

Although not written by an expert in economics or worker's rights, Timmerman presents the stories of clothing makers from around the world. His writing is easy to read and understand. His writing voice is casual and he does not preach. He addresses many problems in the clothing industry and confesses that he has no solutions. Some may see that as the book's greatest weakness. But the greatest strength of the book is the way the stories make everyday clothes more than just clothes, but products of real people with real problems. Some of the problems were the same as mine but others were different. The book ends with a step-by-step guide to learning more about how clothes are made through traveling to the factory. I enjoyed reading Timmerman's adventures and would even consider having an adventure of my own, although some of his experiences were hard to read about. But the ultimate result of reading this book is that I will not see my clothes in quite the same way again. This book will make me more thankful for what I have and even consider ways I can help the situation of the workers who make my clothes around the world.

Works Cited

Timmerman, Kelsey. *Where Am I Wearing?*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2012.