



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Brown University students campaign for Brown to cancel contract with Adidas, 2012-2013

- Student Anti-Sweatshop Labor Movement (1990s - 2010s)

Time period notes: *Prior to the campaign, members of Student Labor Alliance met with the administration multiple times between April and November of 2012*

November

2012

to: 24 April

2013

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: Providence, RI

Location Description: Brown University

Goals:

Have Brown University cancel its apparel contract with Adidas because Adidas failed to pay its contractually obligated severance to the laid off workers of PT Kizone.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 021. Delivering symbolic objects
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 052. Silence

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

- 004. Signed public statements
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications

- 021. Delivering symbolic objects
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Students held a "work out" where they protested while exercising

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 034. Vigils
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- labor activists
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Brown Student Labor Alliance

Partners:

United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)

PT Kizone Workers

External allies:

Workers Right Consortium (WRC)

Brown MEChA

Brown Queer Alliance

Brown Divest Coal

Brown SJP

Involvement of social elites:

None

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- PT Kizone Workers
- United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)
- Workers Rights Consortium

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Brown Divest Coal
- Brown MEChA
- Brown Queer Alliance
- Brown SJP

Segment Length: 1 month

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Brown University

President Praxon

Vice President of Campus Life and Student Services (Margaret Klawunn)

Adidas Corporation

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

No nonviolent responses

Campaigner violence:

No campaigner violence

Repressive Violence:

No repressive violence

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

1 point out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

While the students failed to get the school to cancel the contract, they managed to get the school to agree not to renew the contract, and Adidas agreed to compensate the workers. Therefore, SLA achieved its overarching goal of economic justice for

the PT Kizone employees, and the students had a successful campaign.

The success of the campaign to get Adidas to pay the workers must be seen in the larger context of the whole movement of anti-Adidas campaigns across America.

The movement never reached a large number of Brown Students and the largest gatherings had 30-50 people at them.

PT Kizone, an apparel factory in Tangerang, Indonesia, held major contracts with Nike and Adidas. In September of 2010, the factory started to withhold its workers' severance pay. In January 2011, the factory failed to pay its workers their monthly compensation. At the end of the month, the owner of PT Kizone, Jin Woo Kim, fled to his home country of South Korea. The factory declared bankruptcy and closed on 1 April 2011. PT Kizone fired all its workers, to whom the factory owed \$3.4 million in severance compensation.

Since the factory declared bankruptcy, the employees were unlikely to be compensated during bankruptcy proceedings. However, most university vendor codes of conduct require vendors to ensure that companies in their supply chains comply with labor laws, therefore Nike and Adidas had to cover the missing compensation according to vendor codes of conduct.

While Nike and other companies paid part of the compensation owed, Adidas did not contribute any money toward the severance. As a result, the workers decided to fight for the remaining \$1.8 million of unpaid compensation. Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), a labor rights monitoring group, helped generate international attention to the workers' cause by publishing a report detailing the withheld compensation. Students on a number of college campuses across the United States organized to pressure their school administrations to cut ties with Adidas until the company agreed to compensate PT Kizone employees.

In April 2012, Brown Student Labor Alliance (SLA) pushed Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island to cancel its contract with Adidas. Adidas violated the University's vendor code of conduct (which states that apparel providers must comply with domestic laws in the locations in which they are produced) when the corporation failed to compensate the PT Kizone workers. [United Students Against Sweatshops \(USAS\)](#) [5] had a presence on Brown's campus and across the country. USAS supported SLA from the beginning and, as the Brown campaign began, campaigns against Adidas started on campuses across the US under the blanket name of "Badidas" or "Bad Adidas." SLA initially held a series of meetings with campus officials on the matter.

After months of no progress, SLA started a public campaign in November 2012. The group put out a petition asking for the school to stand by its vendor's code of conduct. On 12 November, the students first held a rally and then walked silently across campus to the office of the Vice President of Campus Life and Student Services, Margaret Klawunn. The chief target of their action was President Christina Praxon, so they then moved onto her office where they delivered the petition, a beach ball (symbolizing the ball was in the University's side of the court), and 18 balloons—one for every hundred thousand dollars not paid to the PT Kizone workers.

Brown administration told SLA that the school put Adidas "on notice" but had not taken any concrete or legal steps to cancel its contract. SLA saw such actions as merely stalling. These initial rallies were quite small with only around 15 people in attendance. In addition, The Brown Herald, the University's student newspaper, published an Editorial Board piece in support of the SLA movement and an op-ed by a member of the organization.

In February, the campaign intensified and SLA held a "work out," which entailed exercising during their protest on the campus main green. They then proceeded to a cafe on campus and chanted "when Adidas workers are under attack, what do we do? Stand up — fight back" and "Ban Adidas, ban, ban Adidas." They then moved to the President's Office and delivered a letter accusing the administration of allowing Adidas to get away with its "shameless lies." The letter also demanded that the University put Adidas on notice for its violation of the University Handbook. As the students left the building they chanted, "we will be back."

Brown administration offered little response to the actions taken by SLA, so the group kept planning actions. On 19 March 2013,

the students held another major rally at the campus student center. They met outside and proceeded around campus. At one point, they chanted outside of the Provost's Office. They then moved onto the President's Office to deliver their petition that now had over 1,000 signatures and a shirt with the faces of over 100 PT Kizone workers on it. When asked for comment, Brown administrators told the Brown Herald that they would not renew the Adidas contract; however, SLA was not satisfied with the school's decision and demanded the immediate termination of the contract.

On 23 April, two PT Kizone employees came to campus to meet and talk to Brown students about their experiences at the factory. Around 30 students attended the event with several other Brown activist groups (Brown Students for Justice in Palestine, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, Queer Alliance, Divest Coal) before marching in solidarity to the President's house to hold a vigil. President Praxon came out of the house and had a brief conversation with the two workers and students. After she left, the students and workers sang songs which included "Which Side Are You On?" and "Solidarity Forever."

The campaign ended on 24 April 2013, when Adidas agreed to compensate the PT Kizone workers. While SLA never achieved their most immediate goal of Brown canceling its contract with Adidas, the coalition of students and the international labor community saw their overarching goal of compensation for the PT Kizone workers achieved.

Research Notes

Influences:

Past campaigns by Brown Student Labor Alliance in 2012 against sweatshop labor influenced this campaign against Adidas (1).

The campaign helped lay the groundwork for a following campaign against Adidas when it fired 1300 workers at PT Panarub Dwi Karya (2).

Sources:

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Additional Notes:

Brown was one of many colleges that participated in the movement against Adidas and its actions at PT Kizone.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Zach Lytle, 02/05/2019

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Links:

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/wave-campaigns/student-anti-sweatshop-labor-movement-1990s-2010s>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-student-participants>

[3] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-participation-more-one-social-class>

[4] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/local-community-or-neighborhood-level-campaign>

[5] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/search/node/%22United%20Students%20Against%20Sweatshops%22%20>