



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## University of Iowa students campaign against sweatshops, 2000

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

*Time period notes: The campaign began in 1999 and protests continued through the end of 2000, but most of the action was concentrated in March-May of 2000.*

December

1999

to: December

2000

**Country:** United States

**Location City/State/Province:** Iowa City, Iowa

**Location Description:** University of Iowa campus

**Goals:**

To convince the University of Iowa administration to leave the FLA, join the WRC, and issue a code of conduct for licensees.

## Methods

**Methods in 1st segment:**

- 021. Delivering symbolic objects › lumps of coal
- 037. Singing › anti-sweatshop carols

**Methods in 2nd segment:**

- 036. Performances of plays and music › puppet street performance
- 038. Marches › to President Coleman's Fireside Chat
- 050. Teach-ins › Presentations on child labor and the role of students in the anti-sweatshop movement

**Methods in 3rd segment:**

- 038. Marches › to President Coleman's house
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › Rally
- 052. Silence › Students covered their mouths with duct tape to symbolize the silencing of workers and activists.
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › of administrative building

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 015. Group lobbying

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 011. Records, radio, and television › Students created their own radio station

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 021. Delivering symbolic objects › lumps of coal
- 037. Singing › anti-sweatshop carols

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Economic Justice

Human Rights

**Group characterization:**

- human rights activists
- students

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

David Burnett, Sherene Judeh, Laura Crossett, James Tracy, University of Iowa Students Against Sweatshops (UISAS)

**Partners:**

United Steelworkers, UI Center for Human Rights, UE-COGS Local 896, AFSCME Local 12, Iowa City Federation of Labor, National Labor Committee

**External allies:**

Senator Tom Harkin

**Involvement of social elites:**

Senator Tom Harkin

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- Senator Tom Harkin
- UI Center for Human Rights

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

- AFSCME Local 12

- Iowa City Federation of Labor
- National Labor Committee
- UE-COGS Local 896
- United Steelworkers of America

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 2 months*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

University of Iowa administration, University of Iowa President Mary Sue Coleman

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not known

**Campaigner violence:**

Not known

**Repressive Violence:**

Not known

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

4 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

The year 1997 marked the start of a nation-wide anti-sweatshop movement led and fueled by college and university students from over 200 campuses. Inspired by early movements on Georgetown and University of Pennsylvania campuses and enraged by Bill Clinton's attempt to mollify the public's anger with the creation of the corrupt Fair Labor Union (FLA), University of Iowa students established a Students Against Sweatshops (SAS, or UISAS) chapter in 1999.

UISAS's main goal was to pressure the University of Iowa administration to join the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), a group created in response to the licensee-driven FLA. In contrast to the FLA, which only investigated concerns issued by manufacturers, the WRC investigated worker complaints and aimed at directly helping give workers' rights groups more power. UISAS also urged the University of Iowa to leave the FLA, to which UI President Mary Sue Coleman signed the university without consulting the SAS, and to issue a code of conduct for licensees and manufacturers of University of Iowa logo clothing. Demonstrations began in December 1999 when UISAS members sang anti-sweatshop Christmas carols outside of the campus bookstore and delivered lumps of coal to President Coleman, a warning of the turbulence to come the following year.

On February 25, 2000, UISAS held a teach-in on sweatshops, touching on topics such as child labor and the role of student activism in the anti-sweatshop movement. The following week, UISAS's Art and Revolution group put on a puppet street

performance called “No More Monkey Business” in Iowa City. On March 27, UISAS held a rally and marched to President Coleman’s Fireside Chat to ask why Coleman refused to pull UI out of the FLA and join the WRC. The next day, to show support for students participating in a hunger strike at Purdue University, UISAS camped out in front of the UI administration building, Jessup Hall.

The turmoil escalated on April 3 when UISAS members occupying President Coleman’s office were removed by UI Public Safety and began a six-day sit-in at Jessup Hall. During that time, UISAS continued to host rallies and teach-ins to speak to over 100 students. The next day, Coleman agreed to join the WRC but refused to cut ties with the FLA. Finally at midnight on April 8, UI Public Safety raided Jessup Hall, evicting the students and arresting five for criminal trespass. However, administrative opposition did not stop UISAS from continuing protests outside of Jessup Hall and starting a two-week period of silence in which students marched outside Jessup Hall every day with red tape over their mouths, symbolizing the silencing of sweatshop workers and those who tried to speak out for them.

Although UI finally released its code of conduct for licensees in May 2000, UISAS’s anti-sweatshop campaign was only partially successful. Despite lobbying state legislature and gaining the support of Senator Tom Harkin, the United Steelworkers of America, and others, the University of Iowa remained a member of FLA.

UISAS continued protests against the arrests of the Jessup Hall 5 in October and delivered coal to President Coleman again in December in response to UI’s continued membership in the FLA.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

UISAS was influenced by anti-sweatshop campaigns on other college campuses such as the University of Pennsylvania. (1)

### Sources:

Elkins, Julie, and Hertel, Shareen. “Sweatshirts and Sweatshops: Labor Rights, Student Activism, and the Challenges of Collegiate Apparel Manufacturing.” *Human Rights in Our Own Backyard: Injustice and Resistance in the United States*. Ed. William T. Armaline, Davita Silfen Glasberg, and Bandana Purkayastha. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. 9-21. Print.

Featherstone, Lisa. “Students Against Sweatshops: A History.” *Sweatshop USA: The American Sweatshop in Historical and Global Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 247-264. Print.

"UE Local and Iowa Students Take a Stand Against Sweatshops." *International Solidarity*: 2000. Web.

"Students Against Sweatshops Lobby Legislators." UISAS. Web. <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~uisas/lobby.html>>.

"UISAS Timeline." UISAS. Web <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~uisas/timeline.html>>.

"University of Iowa Students Against Sweatshops Begins Sit-In: Occupies President Mary Sue Coleman's Office at Jessup Hall". UISAS. Web. <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~uisas/sitin1.html>>.

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

Iris Fang, 15/09/2012

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