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Hidden Workers Fighting for Change

Our economy rests on the backs of workers who are practically invisible, toiling in fields, mines, warehouses, and factories under unspeakable abuses. They're fighting to change the system—and everyone can help.



A boy picks strawberries in a crew of Mixtec migrants from Oaxaca. He says he's 18 years old, a claim he's been told to make if a photographer takes his picture.

David Bacon



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I hope you read this powerful issue of the *Green American* from cover to cover. It features a central part of the work for a green economy: making visible the workers who are the backbone of the economy, the abuses they face, and the fight they lead for economic and social justice.

This systemic abuse has real consequences to all those who labor within it. I've invited my colleague of many years, Christy Schwengel, Green America's major gifts officer, to tell the story of how she encountered those consequences up close and personal.

For an economy that works for all,



ALISA
GRAVITZ

Alisa

Alisa Gravitz, President/CEO

It is rare for many of us in this country to really know the daily challenges of the lowest-wage workers. And for those of us with white privilege, it can be shocking to view just how challenging things can be for many of them, especially when they are also people of color.

Two years ago, I had a life-changing experience that shone a light on my own privilege and power.

Ever, a handyman who has worked at my house over the years, is originally from El Salvador. As a young man, he fled that country's civil war and made a life for himself in the US. As a legal permanent resident, he worked hard in low-paid jobs. Ever was often a victim of wage theft and unscrupulous lenders, but he somehow managed to support his family and maintain his friendly, positive outlook.

In 2016, at just 49 years old, Ever suffered a severe stroke. He was no longer able to work and support his four children. In those terrifying days, I became very close to him and his family—and learned how they were trapped by economic systems that make it extremely difficult to get ahead.

I quickly discovered just how I, as a white person, am treated very differently from Ever and his family. After a few days of frustration as the family tried to navigate their new reality, I became the person to go to the bank, talk to insurance agents, and meet with the landlord on their behalf. When I went to the bank, I was enthusiastically welcomed by the bankers and found I had the power to make their unfair bank fees disappear. And, with the help of friends, we had the power to get Ever the rehabilitation services he needed and to keep his family from being evicted from their rental.

However, despite all my amazing "power," I struggled to navigate the so-called "social safety net." This "net" is extremely inadequate. Every day, I wonder how people in crisis or people struggling with language barriers can even begin to get help when they're in need.

I'm grateful for this issue of the *Green American* with its focus on the realities of "hidden workers." As our editor-in-chief Tracy Fernandez Rysavy says, with our eyes open to worker abuses, all of us can use our economic power "to amplify their messages and their demands for justice."



CHRISTY
SCHWENGEL

For a better world,

Christy

Christy Schwengel, Major Gifts Officer

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Investors to Starbucks: Stop Sucking (Straws)



Stephen Brashear/Getty Images

Actor Adrian Grenier presented As You Sow's shareholder resolution asking Starbucks to phase out plastic straws at the company's annual meeting in March.

While Green America has been campaigning to get the milk that goes inside Starbucks' cups to be organic, our allies have been pressuring the company about the cups (and straws) themselves. In March, nearly a third of Starbucks stockholders threw their support behind a shareholder resolution asking the company to reduce its plastic waste.

Shareholder advocacy nonprofit As You Sow  enlisted the help of *Entourage* actor Adrian Grenier to present the resolution at Starbucks' annual meeting in March.

The resolution asked Starbucks to report on efforts to fulfill commitments it made in 2008 that by 2015, 100 percent of its cups would be reusable or recyclable, and a quarter of its beverages would be served in reusable containers.

Sadly, the company has fallen far short of that pledge. Many of the 4 billion cups it serves are not recyclable, due to a plastic coating that requires special processing for recycling, and only 1.4 percent of its

beverages are served in reusable cups. The company is now proposing to increase the drinks it serves in reusable cups to only 2.8 percent by 2020.

"Starbucks has been a leader in promoting a global 'to-go' disposable coffee cup culture," the resolution stated. "Company straws, cups, and lids are prevalent in street and marine litter: 500 million plastic straws are used by Americans daily, including the company's green straws, which are not recycled and can harm marine mammals and fish. To get back on track, the company should develop a more aggressive, targeted, and comprehensive plan to realize its original goals."

Grenier said at the meeting that Starbucks plans to open a new store every 15 hours in China over the next five years, warning of the increased amount of plastic waste that growth trajectory would generate.

"As investors, it is our fiduciary duty to understand our portfolio's impact on the climate," Grenier said. "The global ocean is the world's seventh largest economy. A

healthy ocean is fundamental to mitigating climate change and its impact. A healthy ocean is also fundamental to ensuring the future of our investments in the company."

The actor also stressed the problem that the company's straws are not recyclable, saying that he'd become passionate about the plastics issue after a trip to Bali, in which he picked up handfuls of plastic waste from the country's beaches: "Starbucks' iconic green straws were among the most prominent in my collection."

The proposal earned significant support, with 29 percent of shareholders voting in favor. Shareholder resolutions don't require majority votes to make a difference, as the thought of nearly a third of its shareholders being unhappy (271 million, in Starbucks' case) has driven many a company to implement environmental and social justice improvements, says Conrad MacKerron, senior vice president of As You Sow.

In fact, last year, McDonald's moved to phase out polystyrene cups and food packaging by the end of 2018, following a 31 percent vote on an As You Sow shareholder proposal asking it to do so. McDonald's also pledged to recycle all packaging in its restaurants globally by 2020.

"We are pleased that a significant number of shareholders sent a message to management that its previous efforts to address cup reusability and recycling are insufficient and that stronger actions are needed," says MacKerron of the Starbucks resolution. "This sizable vote indicates the seriousness with which shareholders view threats to the ocean from discarded plastic straws as well as cups, lids, cutlery, and other food-service items."

For more information, contact As You Sow, asousow.org.

BreakUpWithYourMegaBank.org

ClimateAction.org

GreenAmerica.org/finance

GreenAmerica.org/labor

GreenAmerica.org/restore-it

TakeChargeofYourCard.org

NAACP Launches Toolkit for Energy Justice Action

Solar jobs are almost double what they were in 2010, according to a February report by the Solar Foundation, in spite of the Trump administration's opposition to renewable energy development. But too many of those solar jobs are going to white men, leaving out women and communities of color. That's just one reason that the NAACP's Environmental and Climate Justice campaign launched its Just Energy Toolkit this year.

According to a Solar Foundation report from last fall on diversity in the solar industry, nearly three-quarters of the solar workforce is white.

The NAACP is calling on the solar industry to "do away with practices that keep industries tied to past inequities."

"For the sake of our energy-, environmental-, and climate-justice future, the [solar] picture must include not only white men but women and people of color," write the NAACP's Rosemary Lytle and Vote Solar's Melanie Santiago-Mosier in a blog on the organization's website.

"...Study after study also shows that companies with more diverse workforces and executive boards see higher financial returns. That's why we must all take a closer look at who's being included—and who's being left behind."

The Just Energy Toolkit contains resources and guidance to help people ensure that everyone in their community benefits from the clean-energy future and no one bears too much of the pollution burden from dirty energy.

Download the free toolkit and explanatory webinar videos at naacp.org/climate-justice-resources/just-energy/. And read NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice program director Jacqui Patterson's article on energy justice at greenamerica.org/EnergyJustice.

Black Hair Products Contain Chemicals Linked to Cancer

Lately, the mainstream media has been churning out stories about recent findings that Black women experience alarmingly high childbirth mortality rates. They're three to four times more likely to die in childbirth than white women, according to 2018 government data, and their babies are twice as likely to die in infancy as white



Robert Przybysz / Shutterstock

A new study by the Silent Springs Institute found that products tailored for Black women's and children's hair contain multiple chemicals linked to cancer, asthma, infertility, and more.

babies, according to research released this year from the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

While the causes of these troubling statistics aren't definitively known, some experts blame the stress from dealing with systemic and societal racism. And environmental justice advocates note that an increased chemical burden on Black women, compared to white women, may also be to blame.

A new study by the Silent Spring Institute—a public-interest scientific research nonprofit—may corroborate that theory. Researchers tested 18 hair care products targeted to Black women and children, after surveying Black women about those they commonly use, and found that each product contained between four and 30 endocrine disruptors that are associated with a variety of health effects including reproductive disorders, birth defects, asthma, and cancer. The products ranged from shampoos to hair relaxers to leave-in conditioners marketed as being for Black hair.

"Chemicals in hair products, and beauty products in general, are mostly untested and largely unregulated," says the study's lead author Jessica Helm, Ph.D., a scientist at Silent Spring. "This study is a first step toward uncovering what harmful substances are in products frequently used by Black women, so we can better understand what's driving some of the health issues they're facing."

The results of the study were published in *Environmental Research* in March.

The study also found that hair relaxers

for children contained five chemicals regulated by California's Proposition 65 or prohibited by EU regulations due to toxicity.

It's difficult to rely on labels to avoid problematic chemicals like parabens and diethyl phthalate, which are two of the hormone disruptors found in the products the study researchers analyzed. Eighty-four percent of chemicals detected by the study were not listed on the product label.

Researchers noted that according to national biomonitoring data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women have higher levels of some phthalates and parabens in their bodies than white women. The researchers say this is consistent with their study's findings, which showed that phthalates and parabens were frequently detected in the products they examined.

"Black women are over-exposed and under-protected from toxic chemicals," Janette Robinson Flint, executive director of the California-based nonprofit Black Women for Wellness, said in a statement. "This study is evidence that hair products are an important source of toxic chemicals and that we need to remove these risks to protect Black women's lives and prevent harm."

For more information on the study, visit silentspring.org.

To find out what chemicals are in your personal care products, visit the Environmental Working Group's database at ewg.org/skindeep.

Black Women for Wellness offers resources to help Black women style their hair safely at bwwla.org.



Mining on Sacred Ground

Menominee Nation organizer Tony Brown points to an ancient Menominee storage mound (raised ground behind the small pine trees, and inset photo) near the Back Forty mine site, located on traditional Menominee lands. Brown says the mounds acted as natural refrigerators, keeping goods cold. Anyone who needed something could simply take it from one of these mounds.

Tracy Fernandez Rysavy
Inset photo by Kevin Lancour

Like the Standing Rock Sioux before them, the Menominee Nation has taken up the mantle of “water protectors” in the Midwest. They’re also trying to safeguard their Tribal history.

As the *Green American* reported in our Fall 2017 issue, Aquila Resources, a Toronto-based mining company, wants to site an open-pit sulfide mine, called the Back Forty Mine, in Upper Michigan, 150 feet from the Menominee River.

The Menominee, together with other local residents, are turning out in force to fight off the mine, which would be located on their traditional lands, in the area that’s the location of their origin story. Sacred burial remains of Menominee ancestors have been discovered near the mine site, as have mounds, dance rings, raised garden beds, and other features of cultural and archaeological significance.

While Aquila says it conducted its own archaeological survey and the mine will not encroach on those cultural sites (see the company’s full statement to Green America at greenamerica.org/aquila), the Menominee counter that Aquila did not consult them or obtain their consent. They do not trust that the Aquila survey was as thorough as an independent survey

in which the Menominee themselves took part would have been.

Menominee Nation organizer Tony Brown conducted a tour in April of just some of the sacred and historical Menominee cultural areas near the mine site, pictured on these pages.

“If this raised garden is here, and that mound is there, you want me to believe there’s nothing over there on the mine site?” Brown said on the tour, gesturing toward Aquila’s fenceline. “I don’t. They haven’t been trained in the way [the Menominee have been]. How would they know that’s a garden bed? How would they know that’s a mound? They haven’t done the research, and they won’t let us, the Menominee people, go look.”

Brown noted that while archaeologists have dated the Menominee settlement near the Back Forty site as being more than 13,000 years old, Tribal historians say it’s even older.

The Menominee and other local activists are also against the mine for the impact it could have on local water supplies. Since sulfide mining is more toxic than conventional mining—exposing sulfide ore to air and water easily creates corrosive sulfuric acid—any

leakage from the mine could wreak havoc on the environment. It could also poison drinking water supplies, since the Menominee River feeds into Lake Michigan, the water source for millions.

Aquila received a conditional, final permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on June 4th to start construction on the mine. Aquila must provide the DEQ with plans to model, monitor, and prevent potential environmental damage from the mine, to secure the agency’s final approval.

Local activists say they won’t stop fighting the mine, and members of the Menominee Nation say they’ll put their bodies between Aquila’s equipment and their traditional lands if they have to.

For more information and updates on the water protectors’ efforts, see our article, “The Back Forty Mine: Is It the Next Standing Rock?” online at greenamerica.org/back40fight.

Sign our letter urging the four main investors in Aquila Resources to pull their funding, as the company is moving forward with the mine without community support: greenamerica.org/noback40. To date, more than 14,000 supporters have signed onto this action.

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy



Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

"Further up the river is where [archaeologists] found bones [of Menominee ancestors]."

"To support the people that were on this river, the Menominee had a gifting economy. Today, we all have things that can be sold or taken away from us. Here, everything was shared. ... We don't have a big war history, the Menominee people, because we understood [the importance of cooperation]. Here was joy, love, everything you needed. Our Garden of Eden."

—Tony Brown, Menominee community organizer

"This is a raised garden bed. At first, you might think it's a road track. You can see how much they blend in if you weren't looking. [Archaeologist Dr. David] Overstreet and his people put those stakes in the ground to mark it. 'These weren't just one family's garden. They stretch for big distances. It was a whole village garden. People were much more cooperative, much more interdependent. Part of what's gone on with this society is we've become independent, and that's really not healthy.'"

—Tony Brown



Tracy Fernandez Rysavy



Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

The faint, ring-shaped outline in the grass is an ancient Menominee dance ring, marked by signs put up by the state of Michigan. It's located in the Shakey Lakes State Park, adjacent to the mine site.



"This area ... this was heaven. They found the oldest [type of] wild rice, which was plentiful, here. Wild rice used to grow here. We're called 'the people of the wild rice' because [we knew] you go out there and you get what the Creator gives you. You don't exploit it. You don't plow it up. You don't give up everything else."

"We've got a choice of paths. If we make the right ones, the people, as the Creator made them, will survive. That means all people, not just the Menominee. If we go down that burnt, black path [of siting the Back Forty Mine], it frightens me."

You learn quick that cooperation benefits a lot more people than the destructive path."

—a Menominee water protector on the tour who wishes to remain anonymous

"This is the last of the remaining history of this land and America's history. It would be a shame to destroy it. Water is life."

—Tony Brown



Scott Serio / AP Images

Students from across the country participated in the March for Our Lives in Washington, DC, on March 24, 2018, to call for common-sense gun safety laws. The march was organized by survivors of the February shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

Investing in Common-Sense Gun Safety

Every day, an average of 96 Americans are killed with guns, and the gun homicide rate in the US is 25 times higher than that of other developed countries, according to the nonprofit Everytown for Gun Safety.

The US public largely supports enacting common-sense gun-safety laws to help reduce these fatalities, such as laws to ban attachments that allow a gun to fire bullets more rapidly. An NPR survey—conducted shortly after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, last February that killed 17 students and faculty and injured 17 more—found that three-quarters of Americans want stricter gun laws than we currently have.

Unfortunately, Congress remains gridlocked on gun safety, even after another school shooting happened at Santa Fe High School near Houston, killing ten and injuring ten more, as the

Green American went to press. Investors, however, are taking action.

Investor members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), a nonprofit shareholder advocacy group, have been working behind the scenes with companies and through the shareholder resolution process to pressure weapons manufacturers and retailers to stop selling military- and assault-style weapons and accessories to civilians, make guns safer, and support gun-safety policies.

“Our end game is not to shut down the gun industry. We’re not talking about civilians who use guns to go out and hunt,” says Susana McDermott, ICCR communications director. “We are restricting [our investor efforts] to what are really military weapons [that are] being sold to civilians. At the very least, it’s about ensuring that those products don’t get into the wrong hands.”

Shareholders Press for Change

Shareholder activists have already achieved important victories with gun manufacturers and retailers.

Much of the leadership on the gun safety issue comes from Catholic sisters, who have been working on what Sister Judy Byron calls “militarism” issues since the 1970s, when they took part in anti-nuclear efforts. Byron is a member of the Adrian Dominican sisters and director of the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, an ICCR member in Seattle.

“We’re about the mission of Jesus, and He certainly called us to care for people and have a just society,” says Byron. “I’m sure He would have done something about these weapons, if they’d been around in His day and age. Our Catholic social teaching also drives what we do.”

In 2016 and 2017, Catholic sisters across the US bought up stock in Dick’s Sporting Goods, Sturm Ruger and Co., and American Outdoor Brands (formerly Smith & Wesson), aiming to use their investor power to drive change at the companies. They then sent letters to all three asking for dialogues on gun safety.

“We were quiet about our work, because we thought if the companies were inclined to talk to us, it might not happen if we were out talking to the press,” says Byron. “There was no response. So we decided we would file our shareholder resolutions [for the 2018 shareholder season].”

St. Louis-based Mercy Investment Services—the investment program for the Sisters of Mercy and an ICCR member—led things off by filing a resolution at Dick’s in January, asking the company to commit to conducting background checks on gun sales, support universal background-check laws, and reevaluate its sales of assault-style weapons, including accessories like bump stocks and high-capacity magazines that increase a gun’s firing rate.

While most guns are sold at gun shows and smaller shops, corporate stores like Dick’s are responsible for 12 percent of assault-style weapon and 23 percent of rifle and handgun sales in the US, says the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

In addition, ICCR members Sisters

of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, in Marylhurst, OR, and Catholic Health Initiatives in Colorado filed resolutions asking American Outdoor Brands and Sturm Ruger, respectively, to report on their efforts to make their gun products safer, to report on the reputational and financial risks associated with their products, and to monitor “violent events” associated with their companies.

But then the Parkland shooting changed everything, as the Stoneman Douglas High students catalyzed a nationwide movement for gun safety. The sisters and other ICCR members took the opportunity to approach Dick’s behind the scenes “about the clear business and moral case for immediate corporate action.”

On Feb. 28th, Dick’s agreed to stop selling assault-style weapons, and it raised the minimum age of gun purchasers in its stores to 21. The sisters dropped their resolution at the company.

In April, Dick’s took its commitment even further, committing to purge assault-style weapons and accessories from its shelves and destroy them, rather than selling them or returning them to the manufacturer. A month later, the company announced it was hiring a firm to lobby Congress on gun-safety policies.

“With Dick’s, we have achieved our goal regarding the positive role retailers can play in ending gun violence,” says Sr. Valerie Heinonen, director of shareholder advocacy at Mercy Investment Services.

Though not the subjects of gun-safety resolutions, Kroger announced it would end all gun sales in its Fred Meyer stores, and it would stop selling magazines about “assault rifles” in all of its stores; Walmart raised the minimum age for gun purchases to 21 and will no longer sell high-capacity magazines; it does not sell bump stocks and stopped sales of military-style rifles in 2015.

In May, the resolution at Sturm Ruger received a rare majority vote of 69 percent. While even a ten percent vote on a socially responsible shareholder resolution is often enough to bring companies to the negotiating table, a majority vote sends a clear message that a company’s stock ownership wants action.

“Sturm Ruger needs to not only take their fiduciary responsibility to investors seriously but also their broader and more

important responsibility to society,” said Colleen Scanlon, chief advocacy officer at Catholic Health Initiatives, shortly after the vote. “We are heartened by today’s vote and look forward to dialoguing with the company on ways to make episodes of gun violence a thing of the past.”

Another 2018 shareholder resolution, filed by Stewart W. Taggart, an individual shareholder, asked Chubb Ltd. about the “Carry Guard” insurance it underwrote for National Rifle Association (NRA) gun owners worried about liability in self-defense shootings. The SEC ruled that Chubb could omit the proposal from the ballot on technical grounds, but shortly after the Parkland tragedy, Chubb disclosed that it ended its contract with the NRA three months earlier. While not targeted by shareholders, insurance broker Lockton Affinity said at the end of February that it would no longer act as Carry Guard’s broker and administrator.

A vote on the American Outdoor Brands resolution will take place at the company’s annual meeting this fall.

Mainstream Investors Get on Board

Responsible investors have also conducted outreach at mainstream investment companies like BlackRock and State Street Corp., asking them to use their financial might to press for gun safety, says McDermott. Those efforts have yielded impressive results.

BlackRock, the world’s largest asset manager, stated in February that it would speak with the weapons manufacturers and retailers in which it invests “to understand” their response to the Florida high school shooting. BlackRock also noted that it does not hold weapons manufacturers in its active funds—only in index funds, which are funds that mirror third-party stock indexes.

The company said in a March 2nd follow-up statement: “For manufacturers and retailers of civilian firearms, we believe that responsible policies and practices are critical to their long-term [financial] prospects. Now more so than ever. That is why, over the past week, we have reached out to the major publicly traded civilian firearms manufacturers and retailers to engage in a discussion of their business practices. We have already had constructive discussions with some,

TELL BIG BANKS: SAY NO TO ASSAULT WEAPONS!

Green America has launched a sign-on letter to big banks, asking them to bar the use of their credit products for purchasing high-capacity magazines and bump stocks and for sales of all weapons to those under 21, and to require purchasers to pass a background check. Add your name at greenamerica.org/BanksEndGunViolence.

and we are continuing to pursue our engagement with them all.”

In April, BlackRock introduced two new exchange-traded funds and a line of pension plans that do not include companies that manufacture or sell civilian firearms. It also backed the gun-safety shareholder resolution at Sturm Ruger.

A few days after BlackRock’s initial statement, State Street Corp. announced it would engage with gun manufacturers and sellers over what these companies will do support “safe and responsible use of their products.”

More Companies Make Moves

Several corporations took positive steps on gun safety this spring, bowing to public pressure after Parkland.

On March 22nd, Citigroup announced a new US Commercial Firearms Policy “to do our part as a company to prevent firearms from getting into the wrong hands.” Under the new policy, Citi requires new retail-sector clients and partners to 1) refrain from selling firearms to those who have not passed a background check; 2) restrict weapons sales to people under 21; and 3) not sell bump stocks or high-capacity magazines.

On April 10th, Bank of America announced that it would stop lending to gun manufacturers that make military-style assault weapons for civilian use, prompting the powerful gun lobby to decry the actions of these two “gun-hating banks”.

Outside the financial sector, L.L. Bean announced that it would stop selling guns to anyone under 21. And Canadian-based Mountain Equipment Co-op said it was suspending further orders from five brands owned by Vista Outdoor, a

continued on p. 29

New “Skip the Slip” Report Details Health and Environmental Risks of Paper Receipts

In May, Green America’s climate program released our *Skip the Slip Report*, a first-of-its kind analysis of the environmental and human health risks of thermal paper receipts, paired with solutions businesses can use to reduce those negative impacts.

“This report is going to make business owners’ lives easier if they want to tackle the surprisingly large impacts paper receipts have,” says Beth Porter, Green America’s climate and recycling director. “There are a lot of options people can use that reduce negative environmental and human health effects and are better for customers, workers, and the planet.”

This report comes after the October 2017 launch of the Skip the Slip campaign, which addresses the problem of receipts printed on thermal paper coated with bisphenol-A (BPA) or bisphenol-S (BPS), chemicals that are known endocrine disruptors. The campaign advocates for companies

to stop handing out toxic receipts by offering a no-receipt option, a secure digital option, and nontoxic paper receipts for customers who prefer a paper copy.

Powerful infographics accompany the report to highlight key points, including the chart below. The report also offers consumers actions they can take right away to mitigate the impact of receipts:

1. Decline: Start a transaction by saying you don’t want a receipt, and say no if cashiers ask if you’d like one (we call this “skipping the slip!”).

2. Go Digital: Tell shops and companies you patronize to adopt digital receipts and nontoxic receipt paper—preferably recycled. You can ask in person or via social media or e-mail.

3. Fold It: The back of thermal paper doesn’t usually have coating, so folding a receipt makes it safer to handle.

4. Buy Less: Be mindful of products you purchase, since everything one buys has an impact on the planet. The less you buy, the fewer receipts you’ll have to reject.

Read our new report at greenamerica.org/SkipTheSlip.

Map Your Climate Garden

Last year, Green America launched Re(Store) It! to educate Americans about regenerative agriculture—farming methods that restore soil health and can help draw climate-warming carbon out of the atmosphere. Now, we’re asking regular folks, not just farmers, to plant Climate Victory Gardens and map their location.

Climate gardening, which means using regenerative agriculture methods on a small scale, will open the door for millions of Green Americans to play a role in reversing climate change and sequestering carbon. Examples of regenerative agriculture methods are composting, planting food, using fewer chemicals or gardening organically, and using people-power instead of machines to work your garden.

During the early 1900s, victory gardens were a major part of US war efforts. Citizens came together to feed their families and communities, and produced 40 percent of the nation’s fresh fruits and vegetables, according to the USDA.

“We are once again in the position where we, as everyday citizens, can use our gardens as a force for change,” says Green America food campaigns director Anna Meyer. “It is time to rally to fight climate change by planting Climate Victory Gardens.”

Hundreds have already registered their backyard and community gardens as Climate Victory Gardens, and we want you to do the same. If you have a garden and use some regenerative agriculture practices, (see box, top of next page) or if you’re starting one this year, register it!

Learn more and register your garden on our map at greenamerica.org/GrowAClimateGarden.

Corporate Receipt Practices

This is selection of retailers, not an exhaustive list.

Company	Digital Receipts	Non-phenol Receipts	BPA/BPS Receipts
Best Buy	✓	✓	
Lidl Grocery		✓	
MOMs Organic Market		✓	
Apple **	✓		
GNC Live Well **	✓		
In-N-Out Burger**	✓		
CVS	✓		✓
Macy’s	✓		✓
Trader Joe’s *			✓
Whole Foods Market	✓		✓
Starbucks	✓		✓
Family Dollar			✓
Petco			✓
Target			✓
TJX (TJ Maxx, Marshalls, etc.)			✓
Walgreens			✓
Walmart			✓

NOTE: A checkmark under “Digital Receipts” indicates the company provides e-receipts instead of paper receipts, not in addition to them.

* Trader Joe’s has used BPS in the past, but within 2018, it will roll out phenol-free receipt paper in all stores.

** Apple, GNC, and In-N-Out have not confirmed their use of phenol or non-phenol receipts at this time. However, they do not give out as many paper receipts as other businesses.

CLIMATE VICTORY GARDEN COMMITMENTS

My garden can be a tool to fight against climate change. I will:

- ✓ **Grow Edible Plants**
- ✓ **Keep Soils Covered**
- ✓ **Encourage Biodiversity**
- ✓ **Plant Perennials**
- ✓ **Ditch the Chemicals**
- ✓ **Compost**
- ✓ **Integrate Crops & Animals**
- ✓ **Use People Power**
- ✓ **Rotate Plants & Crops**
- ✓ **Get to Know My Garden**



2018 Cocoa Barometer: Cocoa Farmers in Crisis

In April, Green America, the International Labor Rights Forum, Oxfam, and ten international allies published the 2018 *Cocoa Barometer*, an annual review of the state of sustainability in the cocoa sector, ahead of the World Cocoa Forum that same month in Berlin. This year's report found that cocoa prices have fallen globally in recent years, resulting in a crisis for farmers in the industry.

World market prices for cocoa experienced a steep decline between September 2016 and February 2017, linked to overproduction. Though prices are presently climbing, they are still volatile. According to the *Barometer*, world cocoa farmers have seen their incomes drop by 30 to 40 percent. A recent report by Fairtrade International estimates cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire now earn just \$0.78 per day, compared to the \$2.51 that experts consider a living wage in that country.

Deforestation has also worsened in cocoa-producing countries in recent years. The report notes that farmers, desperate for more income, have razed native forests to set up new production sites. Today, more than 90 percent of West Africa's forests are gone, according to the report.

In addition, the report found that cocoa-farming communities, particularly in West Africa, continue to face high rates

of child labor: Around 2.1 million children work in the cocoa fields of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire alone.

While many chocolate companies have widely touted their sustainability efforts, the *Barometer* reports that corporate efforts to improve the lives of farmers, communities, and the environment have had little impact in the past decade. Most farmers are not reached by existing corporate programs intended to benefit them.

"As long as poverty, child labor, and deforestation are rife in the cocoa sector, chocolate remains a guilty pleasure," says Antonie Fountain, co-author of the *Barometer*. "Current approaches will not solve the problem at scale. Companies and governments need to acknowledge the urgency and make a change. Efforts that cover less than 50 percent of communities cannot be called 'solutions.'"

Green America's labor programs have long targeted cocoa companies, urging them to commit to a supply chain without child labor. Because of this pressure, in 2012, Hershey committed to source 100 percent certified chocolate by 2020. Our campaign against Godiva continues.

The *Barometer* underscores the necessity for cocoa farmers to earn a living wage, and it includes several recommendations for shifting the industry in that direction. The recommendations include actions that fit squarely under the fair trade umbrella: efforts to ensure transparency in the cocoa sector; mandatory requirements for human rights and child labor; long-term contracts and premiums for farmers to help stabilize their incomes, and more. The recommendations also include a moratorium on deforestation.

While governments of cocoa-producing countries have a role to play in ensuring fair prices and human rights for cocoa farmers, the *Barometer* also urges chocolate companies to do their part, rather than continuing to take advantage of low prices brought on by the cocoa crisis.

"The collapse in the price of cocoa means companies have been able to save on purchasing costs while farmers and sustainability initiatives have suffered," says Caroline Chen, social justice campaigns manager at Green America. "The *Barometer* demonstrates the urgent need for a cross-sector focus, including the large chocolate companies, on establishing a living income for farmers."

Chen urges anyone making chocolate purchases to buy fair trade. The fair trade system ensures that cocoa farmers earn a living wage plus a premium to help them improve their communities and explore environmentally sound production methods. Fair trade also requires independent monitoring of cocoa farms, which helps prevent child labor and other forms of exploitation.

Find the 2018 Cocoa Barometer at cocoabarometer.org.

Find fair trade chocolate companies by searching for "chocolate" at Green America's Greenpages.org.

And sign our letter urging Godiva to commit to getting child labor out of its supply chain at greenamerica.org/Godiva.



courtesy of the Barometer Consortium

As cocoa prices around the world have fallen, cocoa farmers have seen their incomes drop 30 to 40 percent.



GreenBusinessNetwork.org

+ Find green companies in our National Green Pages®: greenpages.org

Helicon Works Architect Publishes Book on the Meaning of “Home”



courtesy of Off Grid Quest

Bill Hutchins, principal architect at Helicon Works, recently released his new book, *Dwelling: A Way Home*.

Green Business Network® (GBN) member Bill Hutchins, of Helicon Works, architecture collective, published his first book this spring—*Dwelling: A Way Home* (Politics & Prose, 2018).

“It’s a poetic exploration of home as a deep, still, quiet center,” Hutchins says. “It’s about how we can spiritually create ‘home’ by the way that we create and live in our physical home.”

The book, which he published through Washington, DC, bookstore Politics & Prose, is a collection of poems, short essays, and photos that touch on connections between people and the Earth, and people and their homes, while also exploring how people may find home inside themselves.

In coordination with the book release, Hutchins is launching *Dwelling* events and workshops out of his green home in Takoma Park, MD. The workshops, the first of which took place in May, help people reassess their connections with their homes, forge better

relationships with them, and live mindfully.

Hutchins’ home was the subject of a web exclusive from the Spring 2018 *Green American*. You can read the article and watch a video tour of his green home at greenamerica.org/GreenArchitectAtHome.

Sign up for a *Dwelling* workshop or learn more about the book at DwellingToMakeHome.com.

Green Businesses Take Action on Gun Safety

In May, several members of Green America’s Green Business Network (GBN) launched a letter to major financial institutions requesting action on gun safety. (For more on how businesses and investors are calling for action on gun safety, see our article starting on p.8.)

The letter asks Mastercard, Visa, American Express, and nine mega-banks to add sales restrictions to merchant

credit-processing agreements that will:

1) prohibit the sale of high-capacity magazines, as well as gun accessories like bump stocks, 2) restrict gun sales when buyers are under 21, and 3) sell firearms only to those who have passed a background check. The letter asks that these restrictions be enacted by September 1, 2018.

Appleseed Capital, an investment advisory firm, was one of the first GBN companies to sign the letter. Says Joshua Strauss, portfolio manager, “In Appleseed Fund (APPLX), we don’t invest in gun stocks because we want our shareholders to sleep well at night knowing that they aren’t profiting from the sale of lethal weapons that can be used to kill people.”

To sign the letter on behalf of your Green Business Network business, visit greenamerica.org/GBNForGunControl. To sign the letter as an individual investor, visit greenamerica.org/BanksEndGunViolence.

Sustainable Fashion Awards

Green America’s Green Business Network is pleased to sponsor the Sustainable Fashion Awards 2018.

The Sustainable Fashion Awards are open to designers and brands from all over the world—including emerging talents or professionals—who are leading the way to a sustainable future in fashion, and have at least one completed project. The enrolled project can range from one garment to a full collection, and must fit into at least one of these socially conscious and environmentally friendly categories: handmade pieces; local manufacturing; fair trade; smart design; zero fabric waste; animal welfare; use of recycled, upcycled, or organic materials; consider the full lifecycle of a product.

If you are making fashion products with people and the planet in mind, Green America encourages you to enter the contest. The winner receives a \$3,000 prize and may choose a partner non-governmental organization to receive a matching gift.

Enter the Sustainable Fashion Awards by August 31st at jakandjil.com/sfa2018/.

Hidden Workers Fighting for Change

Electronics. Clothing. Fruits and vegetables. They're not just things sold in stores. They're things made or grown by workers who are practically invisible, toiling in fields, mines, warehouses, and factories under a crushing system of poverty-level wages. And they're fighting to change that system.

It's easy to forget who picks your tomatoes. Or who mines the metals for your electronics. Or who sews your clothing. Or who grabs your online purchases off of warehouse shelves and ships them to you. That—coupled with the fact that labor is one of Green America's four main focus areas—is why we decided to center this issue of the *Green American* on, as our social justice campaigns manager Caroline Chen put it, “the workers people don't always see.” They're behind the scenes—in prisons, in fields under the hot sun, in mines they've dug themselves, inside nondescript warehouses tucked into the far corners of major cities or rural areas.

What they all have in common is that everyone needs them. Without them, we don't have food on our table. Or computers to do our work. Or clothes to cover our backs. They also share a common tendency to be on the receiving end of repeated abuses—wage theft, forced overtime, unsafe conditions, sexual assault by supervisors, poverty-level pay, chemical poisoning, and more.

It's vital to remember that these aren't “poor” Black and Brown people who need saving. They're fighting back—hard. These workers are speaking up, even when their jobs are in danger. They're launching nationwide boycotts and sending veteran workers into fields and factories to educate others about

their rights. They're forming unions and starting programs to help prevent abuse. In the age of #MeToo, they're shining a light on sexual assault and helping companies implement zero-tolerance programs with teeth.

As with any social justice campaign, they need consumers to open their eyes to the abuses going on around them, in the US and around the world—and then to use our economic power to amplify their messages and their demands for

justice. We can buy products made with fair labor. Put our energy behind boycotts. Add our names to petitions, and write letters, e-mails, and social media messages to offending companies. And we can use our investor voice to get our message across to company management.

Together, we can help workers end abuse on the job and stop sweatshop-like conditions once and for all. 🌱

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy, editor-in-chief



The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a farmworker organization in Immokalee, FL, has called for a nationwide boycott of Wendy's, which has refused to join CIW's Fair Food Program, a program that raises wages for tomato pickers and helps curb farmworker abuse. (See p. 16.)

Pacific Press / Alamy

The Immigrants Who Feed The Country

Fruits and vegetables sold in US stores are picked with care by a largely immigrant farmworker force. The work is hot and exhausting, and too many farms—including organic ones—cut corners on worker health, safety, and wages. But workers are showing American farms and food companies exactly how they can improve.



David Bacon

Rosalinda Guillen (far right), director of Community2Community Development, an advocacy organization for farmworkers, talks with young women farmworkers on strike against Sakuma Brothers Farms. Sakuma finally signed a union contract with its farmworkers in 2017.

In the fields of America's breadbasket and beyond, from California to Florida, Wisconsin to Louisiana, farmworkers rise with the sun to pick the fruits and vegetables you see in stores, or to pull weeds on organic farms. It's hard work, but someone has to do it to keep food on America's tables. And usually, that someone is an immigrant worker—nearly three-quarters of farmworkers are immigrants.

95 percent of US farmworkers are from Mexico, three percent from Central America, and the rest from other countries, according to the US Department of Labor. A little over half have legal immigration status. But it really doesn't matter if they have papers or not—what they all have in common is that many are subjected to too-low wages, unsafe conditions, sexual assault

and harassment, and more.

"Agriculture [in the US] was founded with a slave labor force. It was profitable because farms didn't have to pay for labor. That created a culture and an understanding of what farm work is worth," says Rosalinda Guillen, a former farmworker and executive director of Community to Community Development (C2C—foodjustice.org), a "community-led, eco-feminist organization" in Washington state that supports farmworkers as they advocate for their rights.

As a result, she says, farmworkers are almost invisible to the general public: "The invisibility of farmworkers helps justify the low wages, the lack of rights," she says. "If we don't exist, then we're not counted when it comes to opportunities to have an equitable

position in the community—unless it's in a charity model. But we don't need saving. We just need the same opportunities and rights as white people."

In the tradition of legendary farmworker-rights activists Dolores Huerta and César Chávez, farmworkers are fighting on the ground for those rights.

Union Power

Guillen's colleagues say she's brilliant at seeing connections between multiple areas of food sustainability and the farmworker rights movement, so C2C works at the intersection of a broad array of issues: labor rights, environmental sustainability, food access, immigration, and more. It's also fundraising to develop a training center to help farmworkers create farming co-ops.

"We're providing support to farmworker leaders already out there trying to improve conditions for the community," she says. "Farmworkers tell us what issues are important to them."

As part of this work, C2C supports unions like the United Farmworkers of America (UFW—ufw.org), the nation's largest farmworker union, and Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ—familiasunidasjusticia.org), an independent union of over 500 Triqui-, Mixteco-, and Spanish-speaking workers at Sakuma Brothers Farms in Burlington, WA. These unions realized two prominent farmworker victories, with Guillen's and C2C's assistance.

The first occurred in 1995, when UFW won a union contract with Chateau Ste. Michelle wineries after an eight-year boycott over low wages, unpaid overtime, and a lack of collective bargaining rights for farmworkers in the company's WA vineyards. At the time, Guillen

was a UFW regional director in WA.

Today, Chateau Ste. Michelle has one of the best union contracts in the country, she says: "It's union wine from vines to cork. The Teamsters have a [union] contract for the bottling component, and the vineyards have a contract with UFW."

In 2013, FUJ farmworkers had been protesting working conditions at Sakuma Bros. for more than a decade, saying that they'd been subjected to wage theft, poverty-level pay, poor living conditions for migrant farmers, and worker abuse. Since they hadn't made much progress, that year, the workers asked Driscoll Berries, a strawberry company that is Sakuma Bros. largest client, to use its clout to help them negotiate a union contract to address these abuses. When Driscoll refused to step in, FUJ called a state-wide boycott that soon turned into a national boycott.

After four years of boycotts, worker strikes and walkouts, and public pressure, Sakuma Bros. finally caved and signed a collective bargaining agreement in June 2017. The new agreement formally recognized the union; raised farmworker wages to \$15 an hour; ensured that workers facing discipline would be treated fairly; arranged for regular meetings between Sakuma Bros. and union members; and agreed to develop a retirement plan for farmworkers by 2019. Guillen says that because of the union contract, things "are going really well" for farmworkers at Sakuma Bros. today.

C2C's latest campaign supports farmworkers who come to the US on H2A guestworker visas, who say they've had to endure extremely oppressive working conditions, with no clear system for addressing abuses.

Under the program, farms in the US contract temporary farmworkers from Mexico to pick crops in their fields. Growers are supposed to provide housing, food, and travel under the program, says Guillen, but workers are being housed in terrible, barrack-like camps, and "exploitation at the farms is getting worse and worse every year."

In 2017, 28-year-old farmworker Honesto Silva Ibarra died after falling ill on the job at Sarbanand Farms, a blueberry farm in Sumas, WA. While Sarbanand attributed his death to



Margarita Beltran picks a weed growing amid the potato plants on an organic farm in Arvin, CA. She must bend like this to pull weeds several hundred times a day.

David Bacon

complications from diabetes, farmworkers and C2C claim Ibarra died from "extreme dehydration, malnutrition, and exhaustion."

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries ruled in February that no workplace or safety violations contributed to Ibarra's death. However, the agency did cite Sarbanand for potentially up to \$150,000 in fines for violations related to missed breaks and late meals for workers.

Farmworkers at Sarbanand held a protest in the days following Ibarra's collapse and death, including a road march. Sarbanand fired about 65 of the protesting workers, according to the *Lynden Tribune*, a local newspaper.

"This year, we're keeping an eye on Sarbanand," says Guillen, noting that farmworkers could call for a boycott if conditions don't improve. C2C is also calling for the H2A program to be modified or ended altogether.

Guillen says that the H2A program is being expanded under the Trump administration, even while states seem to lack the ability to ensure that guest farmworkers are safe on the job: "That's their solution to farmers saying they don't have a workforce [in the wake of the administration's crackdown on undocumented immigrants], instead of humane immigration policies."

Struggles on an Organic Farm

Organic certification does much to ensure a farm adheres to practices that

are beneficial to the environment. But it does not address worker welfare. Even on organic farms, you'll find farmworkers subjected to long hours, low pay, and abuse. Farmworkers are often fired when they speak up for their rights, but instead of stopping the fight there, some are taking farms to court.

In January 2017, two farmworkers, along with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Coalition (EEOC), filed a federal lawsuit accusing one of Florida's largest organic farms of abuse.

The lawsuits alleged that Glaser Organic Farms, which grows organic produce for Whole Foods and others, stole tens of thousands in overtime pay from vulnerable workers who were undocumented or spoke limited English. The lawsuits also state that Glaser allowed supervisors to verbally abuse workers, and the farm fired workers who spoke up.

The EEOC lawsuit alleged that Glaser subjected Latin American kitchen employees to racial abuse and discrimination, including managers telling workers, "You Mexicans are ignorant," or "Mexicans are lazy," and calling Deborah Velasquez, a Guatemalan worker, things like "*burra*," and "the chocolate one." Velasquez was fired after she complained. Owner Stanley Glaser denied the charges.

In April 2017, Glaser settled the suit by agreeing to pay Velasquez and another kitchen worker \$15,000, to implement an anti-discrimination policy, and to provide bilingual training to



David Bacon

Manuel Garcia, a farmworker from Nicaragua, shows the juice from trimming tobacco plants on his hands and arms. He absorbs nicotine from his work, but the rancher discourages workers from wearing gloves. Tobacco juice is the source of green tobacco sickness, an occupational health hazard.

workers on their federal rights against discrimination and retaliation, overseen by an independent monitor.

Domestic Fair Trade

Many Green Americans know about fair trade, a system that helps farmworkers and other workers achieve fair, living wages, safe and healthy working conditions, collective bargaining, and more transparency. The system also encourages sustainable production. To date, fair trade has been primarily for workers in the developing world. But now, farmworkers are advancing fair trade in the US and Canada.

The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA—thedfta.org) formed in 2008 as a membership organization to “unite the values of organic agriculture with the principles of fair trade” in the US and Canada. DFTA members include farmworkers, farmers, retailers, and processors. Five North American companies

hold DFTA membership, including Maggie’s Organics, Dr. Bronner’s Magic Soaps, Maple Valley Inc., Farmer Direct Co-op, and the Organically Grown Co.

“The concept of domestic fair trade was created because farmworker and small-producer organizations in the US and Canada, as well as organizations and businesses already working internationally on fair trade, found that many of the injustices occurring abroad were also happening right here [at home],” says Erika Inwald, DFTA’s national coordinator. “At the same time, organic certification was growing in the US, but this label largely did not address worker welfare. The domestic fair trade movement seeks to help the public not only choose food that is healthy and sustainable, but also just.”

Rosalinda Guillen and several farmworkers helped launch DFTA and develop the standards for domestic fair trade, which closely match standards in farmworker union contracts. Guillen says she has no idea why companies like Chateau Ste. Michelle don’t label their union food and beverage products, as she thinks it would add value in the way that fair trade labels do for coffee, tea, and other commodities.

DFTA is mainly an advocacy and policy organization. Inwald recommends looking for Food Justice Certification and the Equitable Food Initiative label. (See box, p. 17.) Both certification programs adhere to DFTA standards.

A Penny Per Pound

In the tomato fields of Immokalee, Florida, farmworkers, most of them Latin American and Haitian, pick tomatoes in the hot sun, many of which are destined for prominent fast-food

chains like Wendy’s and Taco Bell. In 1993, realizing that their wage of 50 cents per 32-pound bucket hadn’t increased in 30 years, those farmworkers started the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to collectively bargain for a raise and for an end to worker abuses on Florida farms (ciw-online.org).

Since then, the CIW created the groundbreaking Fair Food Program (FFP), which fast-food, food service, and grocery chains can join to ensure independent farm monitoring to prevent worker abuses, and to provide tomato pickers protections in cases of wage theft, sexual harassment, and forced overtime. Companies that sign onto the program also agree to a rate increase for farmworkers of a penny more per pound of tomatoes, which they say makes a big difference in farmworker earnings.

In 2005, Taco Bell became the first to sign the agreement. Others include Walmart, Burger King, Chipotle, Subway, McDonald’s, Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, Stop & Shop, Giant, Aramark, and more.

Bottom-dweller Wendy’s continues to balk at signing the agreement. The CIW says that rather than joining, Wendy’s pulled out of the Florida tomato industry altogether. The company did release a new code of conduct for its suppliers, but the CIW says it lacks the enforcement and monitoring of the Fair Food Program, as well as the higher wage.

“[It’s] a perfect example of the failed, widely discredited approach to corporate social responsibility that is completely void of effective enforcement mechanisms to protect farmworkers’ human rights,” the group said in a statement.

#MeToo in the Fields

In February 2018, CIW also released a powerful new report, *Now the Fear is Gone*, detailing the plight of women farmworkers in the fields. Women encounter the same wage theft, abuse, and harsh working conditions as men, but they’re much more likely to be victims of sexual harassment or assault.

As the report states, “Over eighty percent of women farmworkers suffer sexual abuse and harassment. Assault and the most extreme forms of harassment are so common that many women

consider it unavoidable. ... As one female worker succinctly described it, 'You allow it, or they fire you.'

Rather than just detailing the problem, the report offers a significant dose of hope in the form of a powerful solution: the CIW Fair Food Program.

In 2010, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission conducted a study of women farmworkers in California's Central Valley. It found that the overall statistic remained true in the Valley: over 80 percent of the women had experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault.

"Hundreds, if not thousands, of women had to have sex with supervisors to get or keep jobs and/or put up with a constant barrage of grabbing and touching and propositions for sex by supervisors. A worker from Salinas, California, eventually told us that farm workers referred to one company's field as the *fil de calzón*, or 'field of panties,' because so many supervisors raped women there," states the EEOC study.

However, the Fair Food Program is making a real difference for farmworkers. Growers must abide by the FFP Code of Conduct, which has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse. When a worker complains, the CIW says that "remediation is rapid, since growers

must fix violations or lose the ability to sell their produce to Participating Buyers," which are mainly large chains that make huge purchases. Those who violate any of the Code's zero-tolerance stipulations find themselves terminated and barred from work on any FFP farms. The FFP provides education to terminated workers to help prevent future occurrences on other farms.

C2C's Rosalinda Guillen says that union contracts provide similar protections for farmworkers against assault: "Contracts provide a legal mechanism for taking action—that workers trust. Nobody can be fired for complaining."

In March, CIW farmworkers traveled to New York City to stage a five-day fast, calling on Wendy's to help end sexual assault in the fields by joining the FFP.

"In the age of #MeToo, business leaders like [Wendy's board chair] Nelson Peltz must use their power to end sexual violence in their companies' supply chains, and not hide behind a shroud of silence that prevents survivors of sexual violence from obtaining justice," said CIW farmworker Lupe Gonzalez in a statement. "Inaction in the face of a problem like sexual assault is unacceptable, but inaction in the face of a solution is unconscionable."

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy



David Bacon

A young woman works on the sorting and bagging machine, which packs onions in the middle of a field. She wasn't going to school because the foreman wouldn't put her to work on the machine if she couldn't work the full day-long shift.

FOOD THAT'S BETTER FOR FARMWORKERS

Look for these certifications to ensure your food is grown by empowered farmworkers and without abuse.

- The Agricultural Justice Project's **Food Justice Certification**

helps guarantee just working and living conditions for agricultural workers, as well as fair rates and contracts. agriculturaljusticeproject.org



- The Equitable Food Initiative **Standard** helps ensure fair wages and working conditions, freedom

of association, a social premium, and more for farmworkers, in addition to helping minimize use of highly toxic pesticides and ensure solid food-safety practices. equitablefood.org

- The new **Regenerative Organic Certified** label ensures that food, body care ingredients, and natural fibers



are grown using organic, regenerative agriculture techniques that improve the soil so it can better act as a carbon sink. This certification also sets a high bar for treatment of and fair wages for farmworkers, and the coalition behind it includes farmworkers. regenorganic.org

- Though it's not a certification program, the **Domestic Fair Trade Association** vets its members to



ensure they are committed to organic production and fair trade principles in the US and Canada. thedfta.org

- **Fair Trade America, Fair for Life, and Fairtrade International Certifications** help ensure living wages and healthy working conditions for producers around the world, though not yet in the US. fairforlife.org, fairtradeamerica.org, fairtrade.net

- Keep informed of which food companies and restaurants have joined the **Fair Food Program**, which pays tomato pickers a penny more per pound and helps combat sexual abuse. fairfoodprogram.org

A Life in California's Strawberry Fields

Lucrecia Camacho tells of making a life but not a living in California's strawberry, tomato, and pepper fields.



Lucrecia Camacho

David Bacon

Lucrecia Camacho comes from Oaxaca and speaks Mixteco, one of the Indigenous languages and cultures of Mexico that were hundreds of years old before the arrival of the Spaniards. Today she lives in Oxnard, CA. Because of her age and bad health, she no longer works as a farmworker, but she spent her life in Oxnard's strawberry fields, and before that, in the cotton fields of northern Mexico.

I've always worked the strawberry harvest here in Oxnard. I'd finish that in July and go to Gilroy to work the jalapeño peppers, bell peppers, and cherry tomatoes. I brought my oldest daughter and son with me, and the three of us worked there. They would get out of school in June and worked July and August with me to earn money for their school clothes. They went back to school the 15th of September, so they worked with me 40 days....

I'd take my kids back to Oxnard for school and return to Gilroy to work all

of September and October. I lived in a large room that was divided into smaller rooms. It had a stove and outdoor bathroom. We were paid by the piece rate instead of the hour. They paid 80 cents for a bucket of jalapeños—[those] with the stem were paid at \$1.10 a bucket. I was able to fill 38 to 40 a day.

I'd get back to Oxnard in November, rest a bit, and then start the strawberry harvest again about January 20th. I worked a long time in Gilroy, starting in 1985. It's been six to eight years since I haven't gone. I couldn't find housing one year, and after that, they wouldn't hire me anymore.

In strawberries, they also paid by the piece rate in April, May, and June. The other months, they paid by the hour. When I first started, it was three dollars an hour, and the piece rate was 80 cents a box. The year before, I was paid \$8.25 an hour. The regular box rate was \$1.25, the little box was \$1, and the two-pound

box was \$1.50. If I was able to fill 40 boxes, it was a good day. The younger, faster men can pick 70 to 90 boxes a day.

The strawberry harvest looks easy enough, but once you try it, it's hard. I don't wish that kind of work on my worst enemy. When you're young, you work hard and get tired, but once you get home and take a shower, you're fine. Now that I'm old, I deal with arthritis and osteoporosis; my feet hurt, and they swell. Many workers have been permanently injured. I have a nephew who hurt his back working in the strawberries, and a cousin who died of pneumonia because we worked in the mud when it's raining.

The fruit that brings the most money here is the strawberry crop, but they pay us a wage that hardly allows us to make a living, then they turn around and sell each box of strawberries for \$18 or \$20. If we pick 80 boxes, how much do you think they make from that? You'd think the owners would have enough money to pay workers higher wages, but they pay it to the foreman instead. He has a brand new car every year, and the worker doesn't get anything. ...

The foremen now choose workers who can pick 100 to 130 boxes per day. I know one who only hires immigrants without papers because she says legal residents complain too much. They tell the ones without papers they're going to call immigration officials or fire them if they complain. These workers try and stay on the foreman's good side by bringing her homemade tortillas, mole, and even Chinese food. I'm not going to bring her anything. I don't get paid enough.

If the foreman doesn't like you, he makes you redo the work. In the strawberry fields, you're always worried that the foreman is going to send you back

and tell you to redo your box because it's not full enough. ...

We just have to put our heads down and work quietly. There were many times I stayed quiet and didn't defend a fellow co-worker, but one time I did speak up. I had a woman foreman who spoke to us disrespectfully; when I asked her why, she told me to give her my tools and fired me. I told her I didn't understand why I was being treated that way, but the other foreman grabbed me by the arm and told me to leave.

Our work and life are hard here, and we don't see many benefits. ... Have you seen the current gas prices? Before, we had to work an hour to cover our cost of gas, and now we have to work two hours. We don't have anything left. The more we earn, the more they take away. We can't move forward. ...

I tell my kids how much I've struggled. ... I'm old now, so the last four years, I was told I worked too slowly. But it's difficult to work in the rain and mud. At times, you're lucky and find a good foreman who gives you waterproof ponchos. Other places charge for them, \$25 for ponchos and \$25 for rain boots.

... I felt so strong when I was young. I could work 24 hours. When I was picking cotton in Mexico, I could easily lift 50 kilos (120 pounds). I don't know if it's old age or my diabetes, but I work a lot slower now. The machine in the strawberry fields goes very fast, and it's frustrating to get left behind. I can't fill the amount of boxes I used to. I feel [nauseous] and get headaches.

They won't give me a job anymore. If the foreman doesn't like you, then you aren't hired. They always choose the pretty women and family members first. As a woman working in the fields, if you didn't have a good foreman, you were treated badly. You had to ask for permission to take a day off, but you were given a ticket. After accumulating three tickets, you were fired.

I've also heard complaints of sexual harassment from women. Sometimes, women don't want to speak up. There are a lot who have lived through it but are afraid to say something for fear that they'll be reported to immigration officials.

In Culiacan, when I was young, I had a foreman who always sought out women to be alone with. He said he liked me, but I told him I knew he had a wife and mistress. He told me that if I let him do what he wanted to me, I would still have a job. If not, I needed to look for another one. I told him he would not see me there the next morning. Some of us women don't take that kind of abuse, but many do what they feel necessary to keep their jobs, even if it means being in the hands of the foreman. My daughter tells me about her factory job and how that still happens there. The women that let the foremen do what they want move up in position. Those that don't, stay in the same position. ...

We need someone to help us and provide us with support. There are only a few of us in Líderes Campesinas. [Editor's note: *Líderes Campesinas is a non-profit organization that develops leadership among women farmworkers, so they serve as agents of political, social, and economic change in the farmworker community.*] If I had a hidden camera, it would be so easy to show others what we face. ... I think a union would help, but it's been difficult for one to get organized in the Oxnard area. When I began to wear my Líderes Campesinas T-shirt, I was told there wasn't work for me anymore. ... I've been looking for work ever since.

When I came here, I didn't expect a better life. I knew I would have to earn my living with physical labor. ... I hope to retire soon and go back to Mexico. I don't plan on staying here, and I'll leave neither rich nor poor. The only thing I'll take with me is aches and pains, because it's not like I have any money to take with me. 🌱

—By Lucrecia Camacho. Excerpted with permission from *In the Fields of the North/*



En Los Campos del Norte by David Bacon (University of California Press, 2016).

All photos on pp. 14-18 are from this book.

The following campaigns support farmworkers and other workers in the food industry as they battle for better wages and more rights:

● **Boycott Wendy's:** The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is calling on consumers to boycott all Wendy's fast food locations until the company joins the Fair Food Program (see p. 16). Contact Wendy's and let it know why you'll no longer eat there by calling 888/624-8140 or e-mailing via the website: wendys.com/contact-us. Learn more about the Fair Food Program at ciw-online.org.

● **Tell Godiva: No Child Labor!** Green America has worked for years to get major chocolate companies to go fair trade, since child labor is rampant in the chocolate industry. Fair trade helps ensure fair labor conditions and wages for workers in the fields and beyond, and fair trade monitors help prohibit child labor. Hershey bowed to pressure from Green Americans and agreed to source 100 percent certified cocoa by 2020. Other chocolate companies have made labor strides as well, but Godiva continues to hold out. Sign our letter to Godiva telling it to get child labor out of its supply chain at greenamerica.org/Godiva. And view our scorecard ranking major chocolate companies on child-labor, at greenamerica.org/chocolatescorecard.

● **Tell Darden to Make Its Food Fair:** Darden Restaurants owns more than 1500 restaurants across the US, including Olive Garden, Longhorn Steakhouse, and others. Join Green America and our allies in calling on Darden to serve greener meals that adhere to Good Food Purchasing Principles by 2020. These principles include purchasing food at fair prices from small- and medium-scale growers and ensuring a living wage and sustainable working conditions for all workers in their supply chains. The Principles also include efforts to ensure environmental sustainability, high nutrition, and good animal welfare. Sign our letter to Darden at greenamerica.org/DoBetterDarden.

On Sale Now: Prison Labor

Walmart, Victoria's Secret, and even Whole Foods have used US prison labor to keep their production costs down. Are those workers being exploited?



Andrew Lichtenstein / Getty Images

Prisoners from the Jim Ferguson Unit, a state-owned prison in Midway, TX, bring in the harvest from the prison's cotton fields. A former slave plantation, the Ferguson Unit is a maximum-security prison and a working farm.

Every day, incarcerated and detained people in both US government and private prisons perform labor during their sentences, with few exceptions. Many provide services for the prison itself, such as cooking, laundry, and maintenance tasks, while others make goods or provide services for the government or private companies. The prisoners and organizations that advocate on their behalf say they're being forced to work in intolerable conditions for virtually zero pay.

While there may be some benefits for prisoners who work while incarcerated, the prison system strips many of these workers of their fundamental rights.

A History of Exploiting Prisoners

The use of prisoner labor has roots that go back to the system of slavery in the US. Passed three years after the 1862 Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in Confederate states after the Civil War, the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution outlawed any con-

tinuance of slavery, "except for punishment of a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."

The amendment created an incentive for the South to criminalize more people to replace the now-freed slaves on whose backs their entire economy once rested, say experts. Their main target: recently emancipated African Americans.

The exploitation and dehumanization of antebellum slaves and modern-day prison workers aren't that far apart, says Ashley Ragus, a member of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC—incarceratedworkers.org), a subgroup of the Industrial Workers of the World, one of the only labor unions fighting for incarcerated worker rights.

"Imprisonment is total confinement, surveillance, loss of true physical autonomy, and lack of adequate food, shelter, and education within a completely toxic environment," says Ragus, who was motivated to become involved in IWOC in part because she had an incarcerated parent. Ragus also notes, "slavery is

not just about labor—it's the total dehumanization and social isolation of an entire class of people."

That kind of dehumanization continues to happen today to prison workers, she says.

Cutting Costs with Prison Labor

In the US, many prisoners are assigned to labor programs run by either the local, state, or federal government, or by a private prison operator, the two largest being Core Civic (once known as Corrections Corporations of America) and GEO Group. Private prison operators are for-profit companies that receive government contracts to run prisons.

Public prisons, private prisons, and private companies lean on inmate labor as a cost-saving measure. Prisoners do not have the right to a minimum wage. The average wage for incarcerated workers is 86 cents an hour, according to the Prison Policy Initiative, and some prisons forgo a wage altogether.

In federal prisons, incarcerated workers often produce goods including clothing, military gear, foods, electronics, and office furniture, or provide services like call-center staffing and warehousing through the UNICOR federal prison labor program, under the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Workers in private prisons often provide specialized industry services including electrical wiring, masonry, carpentry, and plumbing, which are hired out to other companies.

But the bulk of the work inmates do in both types of prisons is in maintaining the prison itself, working as janitors and cooks, or doing laundry.

In 1979, Congress implemented the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification program (PIECP), which allows local and state prisoners to participate in work programs in the private sector. For the businesses involved in PIECP, the competitively cheap cost of inmate

labor provides an enticing draw. Companies like Walmart, Victoria's Secret, and Whole Foods have been outed by activists in recent years for ties to prison labor, which produces goods at a much lower rate than minimum-wage workers earn.

Workers Without Rights

Incarcerated workers do not possess the same rights as non-incarcerated employees—and often suffer for it, according to nonprofits like the Prison Policy Initiative (prisonpolicy.org) and Enlace (enlaceintl.org).

For example, prisoners do not have the right to unionize. Incarcerated workers don't receive sick leave, nor do they have a human resources department to address concerns.

Their working and overall conditions often leave a lot to be desired, as well. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2018, prisoners at eight Florida state prisons, operated by the Florida Department of Corrections, participated in a work stoppage known as Operation PUSH, in which incarcerated workers, who provide cooking, cleaning, and maintenance services in Florida prisons, protested longstanding grievances. Specifically, the prisoners called for payment for their labor, "rather than the current slave arrangement," where they only receive a small amount of time deducted from their sentences. They also called for an end to "outrageous canteen prices," noting that a \$4 case of soup costs \$17 in the canteen, a fact made more poignant when contrasted with their lack of earnings.

"This is highway robbery without a gun. It's not just us that they're taking from. It's our families who struggle to make ends meet and send us money—they are the real victims that the state of Florida is taking advantage of," a group of prisoners said in a statement released by IWOC. "By sitting down and doing nothing, each institution will have the responsibility of feeding, cleaning, and all the maintenance. Do the math."

The prisoners also called for an end to overcrowding and prison officer brutality, as well as to executions on death row. They also drew attention to the environmental conditions Florida prisoners face, "including extreme temperatures, mold,

contaminated water, and being placed next to toxic sites such as landfills, military bases, and phosphate mines."

Later in January, IWOC led a telephone and #OperationPUSH social media campaign in support of the strike, pressuring the Florida Department of Corrections to release an inmate pegged as an Operation PUSH leader from a freezing cell where he was being held in solitary confinement.

In fact, too often, incarcerated workers are forced to work under looming threats of solitary confinement and lost good behavior time, according to the Global Research Centre.

In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which mandates that employers provide a workplace free from recognized hazards, does not cover federal and state prisoners. In 2010, a four-year investigation led by the Justice Department Inspector General found that incarcerated workers at ten federal prisons were exposed to toxic lead and cadmium while processing electronic waste. The *New York Times* reported that the investigation was prompted by complaints that the work made prisoners sick.

Conditions like these, compounded with the fact that almost 600 US federal and state prisons are located within three miles of EPA Superfund Sites, make prisons dangerous places to work.

While prison labor programs can provide inmates with job skills and training, IWOC's Ashley Ragus says, "It's the low pay, exorbitant commissary pricing, forced restitution withholdings from prisoner paychecks, and arbitrary punitive measures within the prisons that make prison labor a problem."

Private Prisons: Worst of All?

Private prisons hold eight percent of the US imprisoned population. To win contracts from the government, private prison companies offer their services for a cheaper price than what the government would pay to operate their own facilities. The inmates and staff who work in private prisons pay the biggest price, as cheaper costs usually means poorer safety and health standards.

A 2016 report from the Justice Department found that private prisons have

STOP PRISONER EXPLOITATION

The following action steps can help pressure prisons to stop exploiting incarcerated workers:

- **Divest:** Enlace is calling for divestment from GEO Group and Core Civic private-prison companies, as well as the six mega-banks that fund them: Wells Fargo, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, BNP Paribas, SunTrust, and US Bancorp. Learn more at enlaceintl.org.
- **Break up with your mega-bank:** Even if you don't bank with one of the six banks, above, breaking up with your mega-bank and moving your money to a community development bank or credit union helps build communities. Find resources to help you switch at [GreenAmerica's BreakUpWithYourMegabank.org](http://GreenAmerica'sBreakUpWithYourMegabank.org).
- **Vote:** Look for shareholder resolutions on prison labor in 2019, and vote in support of them if you hold stock in the targeted companies. Also, ask political candidates about their stands on prison labor as you prepare to vote in the midterm elections.

more safety and security incidents per capita than federal institutions.

Unlike government prisons, private prisons are driven to increase profits, which gives them a perverse economic incentive to criminalize and incarcerate people, says Jamie Trinkle, research coordinator for Enlace.

"Private prisons' entire business model is based on the detention and incarceration and capture of Black and Brown people, and they lobby heavily to promote policies that encourage incarceration," says Trinkle.

She notes that cutting corners to save on operating costs also results in poor medical and psychological care for prisoners, human-rights abuses such as overcrowding or poor food and living conditions, and a lack of services that enable incarcerated people to re-enter society.

Undocumented Targets

Private prisons are profiting from the push under the Trump administration



Johnny Crawford / Associated Press

Inmates on the Gwinnett County, GA, work crew cut grass at a park. The prison inmate labor program has saved the county millions in labor costs.

to incarcerate increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants.

In 2010, Arizona passed SB 1070, a law that allowed police to ask anyone whom they suspected was an undocumented immigrant to provide proof of their legal status. SB 1070 targeted hundreds of Latin Americans in Arizona, and those who could not provide documentation were sent to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center—many operated by Core Civic.

“Core Civic ... was involved in the lobbying, promoting, and actual passage of Arizona’s SB 1070 law,” says Trinkle. “Core Civic already had many contracts with ICE for immigrant detention, so [the law] was a way to funnel more people directly into private prisons.”

Likewise, President Trump’s tough immigration policies are expected to increase the number of undocumented immigrants in the US—and thereby, increase the number of people in ICE-contracted detention facilities.

For example, ICE under the Trump administration has been arresting and locking up those seeking asylum for prolonged periods, a violation of US and international law. In March, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a federal lawsuit “to challenge the Trump administration’s arbitrary and illegal

incarceration of thousands of asylum seekers who fled persecution, torture, or death in their countries of origin.”

Those in immigration detention centers aren’t immune to worker exploitation. Detained immigrants at an ICE detention facility in Aurora, CO, filed a lawsuit in February against the GEO Group for forcing detainees to clean the facility for free and throwing those who refused in solitary confinement, according to the American Bar Association. Another lawsuit alleged that GEO Group paid some detainees only \$1 a day for cooking, laundering, and cleaning jobs.

In 2014, detained workers at the GEO Group-run Tacoma Northwest Detention Center organized a hunger strike to protest their labor conditions.

“They were being forced to work for a dollar a day or for a candy bar, and if they didn’t work, they were put in solitary confinement,” says Trinkle.

Divest, Break Up, and Vote

Activists are combating the unfair situation of prison workers through their investments.

Enlace and other groups are calling for divestment from GEO Group, Core Civic, and the banks that fund them. A 2016 report from In the Public Interest found that six mega-banks are providing the

bulk of financing to Core Civic and GEO Group: Wells Fargo, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, BNP Paribas, SunTrust, and US Bancorp.

University students have racked up a couple of high-profile wins on this front. The entire University of California (UC) system divested \$30 million from private prisons in 2015 in response to campaigns by the Afrikan Black Coalition, a racial-justice student group. The UC system also terminated more than \$470 million in contracts with Wells Fargo over its financing of Core Civic in 2017.

Perhaps the most beneficial part of prison divestment is being able to reinvest in communities, says Trinkle.

In 2016, Black students at California State University–Los Angeles got their school to divest from private prisons, and they also got the system to reinvest in Black students.

“The Black Student Union there won prison divestment and immediately also got the promise of investment in retention and recruitment of Black scholars, a housing unit, as well as money for the multicultural center and psychological services for Black students,” says Trinkle. “That’s what we need to see, divestment as well as ties to concrete reinvestment in communities that are the most harmed by criminalization.”

Those wishing to divest from companies with prison labor in their supply chains will find it’s not always easy to tell which companies are involved. Even the research team at NorthStar Asset ManagementTM was shocked to discover via news reports that the socially responsible investments it made on behalf of clients included prison labor.

“We pride ourselves on in-depth research to screen out a variety of exploitive companies and industries, yet when news broke that Whole Foods (a company in our portfolio at the time) had sourced products from suppliers using prison labor, we knew we needed to try to map exactly where prison labor might show up in the supply chains of our investee companies,” says NorthStar’s director of shareholder activism and engagement, Mari Schwartzer.

Schwartzer notes that many companies do not have a clear picture of how they may be linked to inmate labor

through suppliers, leaving them vulnerable to “an oncoming storm of bad press,” as happened with Whole Foods.


Shortly after the news of the company’s ties to prison labor broke in 2015, consumers called for a boycott, and Whole Foods soon announced it would end its partnership with Colorado Correctional Industries.

Schwartzter says that the company missed an opportunity to engage with suppliers on this issue: “We believe that Whole Foods could have advocated for improvements in the wages, working conditions, and benefits (such as job placement upon release) of the inmates.”

The Whole Foods news launched NorthStar into an investigation of the presence of prison labor in company supply chains. The resulting report, *Prison Labor in the United States: An Investor Perspective*, provides advice to help institutional investors avoid unwittingly supporting businesses using prison laborers. For individuals, the report recommends getting involved in shareholder advocacy.

NorthStar filed one of the first shareholder proposals around prison labor this spring, asking Costco to “identify sources of prison labor in its supply chain and create a set of supplier guidelines for the use of prison labor.” The proposal received 4.8 percent of the shareholder vote, which Schwartzter calls “encouraging,” as it meets the threshold needed for NorthStar to refile the resolution next year.

NorthStar also filed a similar resolution at TJX, which owns TJ Maxx, Marshalls, and Home Goods. The TJX vote will occur on June 5th, as this issue of the *Green American* goes out to our members. (Visit northstarasset.com for updates.)

Schwartzter says NorthStar will continue to engage companies on prison labor: “Ethically, we are deeply concerned” about this issue, she says. From a financial perspective, she notes that “brands like Walmart, Victoria’s Secret, and Whole Foods have seen backlash and brand-name harm due to their connections to prison labor, and the negative associations can linger long-term.” 

—Sytonia Reid, editorial fellow

Life in an Electronics Factory

Your cell phone and other favorite electronics may have been made in an abusive sweatshop—and poisoned the workers who made them.

The nonprofit China Labor Watch (CLW), a longtime ally of Green America’s, has a history of exposing what life has been like in Chinese supplier factories, which make many of the electronics on US store shelves. CLW has sent a number of undercover workers into those factories to report on their experiences.

Most recently, from October 2017 to January 2018, CLW infiltrated the Catcher Technology Co. Ltd. factory in Suqian, China, which manufactures electronics for Apple, IBM, Dell, Sony, HP, and other brands. CLW identified major issues at Catcher regarding worker health and safety, pollution, and forced overtime.

CLW says the Catcher factory employs a complex shift rotation schedule that results in workers putting in overtime hours without earning overtime pay. An average schedule at the factory was ten hours a day, six days a week, while the company promised an eight-hours-a-day, five-days-a-week schedule in a work regulation pamphlet. Production line workers had to stand for all ten hours, as the factory doesn’t provide seats, resulting in workers quickly becoming exhausted.

Catcher workers encounter toxic chemicals on the job, according to CLW. But the factory provided CLW investigators and other workers with less than one hour of safety training and only paper masks, as well as cotton gloves that appeared to be used. The factory did not distribute eye protection.

Catcher doesn’t disclose to workers—or the public—what chemicals its workers might encounter on the job. But one CLW investigator had to leave the factory after four weeks due to respiratory issues from chemical exposure.

In addition, states a CLW report, “there is a foul odor present in the workshop, but workers are unsure what object is producing the smell. Workers privately discuss how severe the pollution is at Catcher, and there were rumors that workers who worked at [a particular] workshop for a substantial amount of time might develop cancer.”

There is hope that things will improve. Some major tech companies (whose names you’re likely familiar with) are now working with Green America’s Center for Sustainability Solutions to make their supply chains safer.

The Center’s Clean Electronics Production Network (CEPN) is bringing together major electronics retailers and suppliers, labor and environmental advocates, and occupational health and green chemistry experts, along with the workers themselves, to eliminate worker exposure to toxic chemicals in electronics factories. CEPN convenes regular gatherings of these industry stakeholders to focus on the following: 1) creating a system to simplify data collection on toxic chemicals, 2) ranking chemicals used in the industry to prioritize those that are highest risk for action, 3) developing cleaner substitutes for toxic chemicals, and 4) devising a framework for factories to use to substantially involve workers in protecting themselves and others from chemical exposure. To read our exclusive from CEPN director Sarah O’Brien detailing more of this work, e-mail info@greenamerica.org for a digital copy of the article.

While CEPN has helped some big industry players make big strides for worker safety, Samsung continues to be a laggard in the industry, refusing to take steps to improve supplier factories. Green America and allied organizations from around the world delivered 200,000 signatures on various chemical-safety petitions to Samsung in April. The petitions addressed findings from reports about how Samsung factory workers in South Korea and Vietnam were being exposed to toxic chemicals.

“The fact that major brands are now working with their entire supply chains, including workers, to finally address this problem in a meaningful way is very exciting,” says Caroline Chen, Green America’s social justice campaigns manager. “Now, Samsung needs to step up and protect the workers in its supply chain.”

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

Sign our letter to Samsung, telling it to take action for worker safety from toxic chemicals, at greenamerica.org/end-smartphone-sweatshops.

The True Cost of Two-Day Shipping

Amazon continues to grow in popularity for its low prices and fast delivery. But warehouse workers behind the scenes are paying for it all with bottom-level salaries and back-breaking work.



Workers at an Amazon warehouse.

Johnnie Johnson / Alamy

In cities across the country, people are waiting with bated breath to see where online retail giant Amazon will build its planned second headquarters, because they're hungry for the 50,000 jobs the company says it will add as part of the expansion.

Amazon has already busted out of its headquarter city of Seattle. It has 75 fulfillment centers across the US employing 125,000 full-time workers, according to company reports, with hundreds of other locations and hundreds of thousands more employees around the world. But what goes on behind the closed doors of those fulfillment centers—and thousands like them owned by other companies—is a dangerous business.

Temporary Workers, Permanent Problem

After the labor movement of the 1940s and '50s, warehouses jobs were stable, paid enough to support a family, and offered benefits. But in the following decades, costs fell as companies outsourced manufacturing, and box

stores saw they could increase profit by paying US warehouse workers less, too.

Temporary workers are now standard in the industry—an organizer in Southern California says up to 40 percent of warehouse jobs in the state's Inland Valley region are temporary, and in Chicago, organizing group Warehouse Workers for Justice estimates more than 60 percent of the city's 80,000 warehouse jobs are temporary. Chicago and L.A. are the biggest shipping hubs in the US.

Temporary workers provide companies with a more flexible labor force requiring fewer benefits than full-time, salaried employees. They are also a more "vulnerable workforce with unclear lines of accountability for health and safety," states a 2018 report from the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH).

The way companies like Amazon and Walmart fulfill temp positions is through staffing agencies, which find, hire, and pay workers. This system prevents unionization—because not all jobs in one warehouse are for the same staffing company—and helps corpo-

rations save on health insurance and other costs.

Sheheryar Kaoosji is executive co-director at the Warehouse Worker Resource Center in Ontario, CA, a non-profit that aims to improve working conditions in the Inland Valley of California, home to a large warehousing industry.

"There's 80,000 jobs available [here], but because of the temp system, there might be 200,000 people flowing in and out of those jobs—they're not fully employed," explains Kaoosji. "It's a key part of the 'working poor' economy in our region."

He says workers who move to the Inland Valley, because of the lower cost of living and many job opportunities, end up scrambling to make ends meet.

"The warehouse worker population is almost entirely people of color, and it's lots of people who are new to the community," Kaoosji says. "It's a lot of people ... who are trying to hang on and make a life for themselves. This region was promised that these jobs would be the future of the economy, and it's not turning out to be that way."

Humans Treated Like Machines

Ten percent of the warehouse jobs in the Inland Valley are at Amazon warehouses. Kaoosji says people must pay attention to Amazon because it draws in workers with wages a few dollars higher than minimum wage, and as one of the country's largest retailers, it impacts how other companies treat their workers. [Editor's note: Green America has a campaign pressuring Amazon to clean up its coal-powered cloud operations: greenamerica.org/AmazonCloud.]

Recently, workers have spoken out anonymously to various news sources about the bad conditions in Amazon's warehouses.

As orders come in via the Amazon website, workers called "pickers" retrieve items for orders from stocked

SUPPORT WAREHOUSE WORKERS

warehouse shelves, putting them onto giant shopping carts and delivering to a boxing station. Amazon holds pickers to a steep piece rate, reported to be from 85–300 items per hour.

Pickers can be and have been fired for not making rate, and these workers complain of back and joint pain from bending, reaching, and being on their feet all day. Some workers report walking more than ten miles per shift through huge fulfillment centers.

Roberto Jesus Clack is an organizer with Warehouse Workers for Justice (WWJ) in Chicago. He says that Amazon's goal is to provide the same instant gratification as department stores.

“Really, its goal is to be able to get people as many products as possible within the day, or even within a few hours of ordering,” Clack says. “There’s a ton of pressure on the workforce to always speed up, speed up. [WWJ] is really concerned about safety issues, and whether [workers are] being compensated appropriately for the value they add.”

Other reports make Amazon's warehouses seem like sweatshops. Security checks to prevent worker theft are included in break times, so half-hour lunch breaks and timed bathroom breaks end up being shorter than promised. Employees have reported being written up for not showing up for overtime hours, which should be voluntary by law.

Since 2013, there have been seven fatalities among Amazon warehouse workers. In 2013, picker Jeff Lockhart Jr. died after collapsing during his overnight shift. A cardiologist who reviewed his autopsy said it was likely from overexertion. And last year, two workers were crushed by warehouse vehicles, calling into concern the safety procedures of both drivers and ground staff.

The Associated Press reported in November that Amazon could face \$28,000 in fines from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for safety violations that led to last year's deaths, including a \$7,000 fine for failure to provide training.

Earlier this year, Amazon made headlines when it was approved for a patent for a wristband that tracks workers' movements. The wristband will buzz when a worker's hand is close

to the item they're reaching for, to help reduce the time needed to locate the correct item on a crowded shelf.

Kaoosji, says the wristband is just the latest push in the company's efforts to improve its employees' piece rates.

“Amazon has a specific kind of problem that stems from its obsession with metrics, and because of technological advantages, their surveillance regime is about as good as it can get,” Kaoosji says. “They're surveilling employees to watch exactly what they're doing and how quickly they're moving.”

That kind of constant pressure to meet ever higher fulfillment quotas has created a culture at Amazon warehouses where stressed-out employees forgo bathroom breaks or urinate in bottles, out of fear of being disciplined or losing their jobs, according to journalist James Bloodworth, who went undercover in a UK Amazon warehouse, the subject of his new book *Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low Wage Britain* (Atlantic Books, 2018).

Dangers of the “Lower-archy”

Many warehouse workers are afraid of losing their jobs if they report a safety violation or complain about conditions.

Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, co-executive director at National COSH, describes the people who feel least comfortable speaking out, and who are the lowest-paid workers as a “lower-archy.”

“The lower you are, the fewer job options you have, the more that you risk if you speak up about a labor violation—be it health and safety or not being paid—and the less likely you are to feel comfortable speaking up,” Goldstein-Gelb says. “There's a few factors that make you vulnerable: if you don't speak English, if you're younger, if you lack a union, if you're a temporary worker. If you're in a day-to-day situation where you could be fired for speaking out, then your life is at risk.”

National COSH and its regional groups are trying to make workplaces safer by training employees on what to look for to assess workplace safety, how to speak up if their workplaces aren't safe, how to work with unions, and how to talk to communities about the importance of having strong safety laws and standards.

Across the country, warehouse workers are organizing for better working conditions. Here's how you can amplify their efforts:

- **Support unions.** Shopping at stores where the workers are unionized supports fair wages and safer workplaces. Instead of buying groceries at Amazon or Walmart, try union stores like Kroger or Albertson's. Find one at ufcw.org/grocery. Find union-made products at unionlabel.org > Union-Made Product Search.

- **Shop green and local.** Avoid big-box and online retail giants like Amazon when you can, and shop with local, green businesses instead. Find those near you at GreenPages.org. And see Green America's “11 Greener Options Than Amazon” at greenamerica.org/GreenerThanAmazon.

- **Support campaigns at warehouse worker organizations.** Stay informed through Warehouse Workers for Justice (ww4j.org), the Warehouse Workers Resource Center (warehouseworkers.org), and the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (coshnetwork.org).

Consumers can help by telling their Congressional representatives to press for adequate staffing at OSHA, Goldstein-Gelb says. This federal agency can make workplaces comply with regulations for worker safety by sending in investigators who cite employers for violations. However, nearly 50 investigator positions have opened up and not been rehired since the beginning of Trump's presidency. Goldstein-Gelb notes it would take the current number of investigators 140 years to look into all complaints that are on file right now (with no new ones added).

“In the ideal world, employers would simply want to have safe workplaces and do it on their own without any need for enforcement, but too often, we find that employers are cutting corners and trying to make a quick buck at the expense of workers,” Goldstein-Gelb says. 🌱

—Eleanor Greene

Green Tech's Underground Workers

Most of the cobalt in today's electronics is extracted by "artisanal miners" in the DRC. They dig their own dangerous mines without protection, and some employ child workers. Big Tech could make a difference.



A man enters a tunnel dug with shovels in a cobalt mine located 22 miles from the town of Likasi in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Schalk van Zuydam / Associated Press

Big, rechargeable batteries are key to a green future. They're required for electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, which are a huge part of how the world plans to combat climate change. Norway, the UK, the Netherlands, India, and France have all set timelines for bans on the sales of new cars with fossil-fuel-powered engines. China has also made a commitment to phase out the combustion engine but hasn't set a date. Home storage cells for saving solar energy generated by day for use at night, like Tesla's Powerwall, have already mitigated reliance on dirty fossil fuels. But far from sleek electric cars and green homes, barefoot children and vulnerable adults make up the beginning of the green battery supply chain—all because these batteries they help create use a

mineral called cobalt, a byproduct of nickel and copper.

The mining practices used to extract cobalt from the Earth involve child labor and dangerous working conditions.

Even if you don't have a taste for cutting-edge green tech, you've probably had your hands on something touched by problematic mining practices: Anything with lithium-ion batteries, including all cell phones, tablets, and laptops, uses cobalt.

Where Cobalt Comes From

Amnesty International and The World Bank estimate more than half of the world's cobalt originates from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The DRC meets more than half of worldwide demand for cobalt through artisanal miners. (The rest comes from

industrial mines in China, Australia, Zambia, and Russia.) Artisanal mining sounds quaint, but what it means is that miners don't have an employer—they dig mines with shovels instead of power diggers and climb through them without safety equipment and without engineers to map out safe mining routes.

An estimated 40 million people earn their living in artisanal mining (not just in cobalt), according to the World Bank. In comparison, industrial mining operations employ only seven million worldwide, meaning that most miners don't have an employer.

Children as young as seven sift piles of ore coming out of artisanal mines, looking for pure cobalt. During this process, they may inhale toxic dust from heavy metals. The miners sell what they find to refiners at local markets, who may not give a fair price.

The Hazards of Cobalt Mining

Experts do not consider cobalt a "conflict mineral"—like tungsten, tantalum, tin, and gold—because the profits from the mines go to the miners, not to military groups for weapons purchases. But cobalt miners still have significant safety issues to worry about.

Amnesty International and Afre-watch's 2016 report, *This is What We Die For*, compiled research about the human rights and health concerns of artisanal cobalt mining. The report highlights that since most miners do not have any safety equipment, they're exposed to cobalt dust, which can cause asthma and breathing problems, and even a fatal disease called "hard metal lung disease." One scientist from the University of Lubumbashi in the DRC

told the *Washington Post* that a high number of premature births and birth defects may be linked to toxic exposure related to mining activity in the country overall.

Hand-dug mines, which can be up to 330 feet deep, according to the Amnesty report, are poorly ventilated and are prone to collapse. There aren't official data on the number of fatalities, but a DRC radio station tracked more than 80 miner deaths between 2014 and 2015. The report says, "The true figure is likely to be far higher, as many accidents go unrecorded, and bodies are left buried underground."

Child Labor at the Mines

The DRC government has promised to eliminate child labor in mining by 2025. But with 40,000 children working there in cobalt mining alone, the problem is "massively complicated," says Mark Dummett, business and human rights researcher at Amnesty International. He doesn't believe the DRC can eliminate child labor that quickly.

"You can't just send police in and chase kids out of the mines. You need to put in place all kinds of measures: They need to go to school instead, so there need to be schools in place. There need to be economic incentives for parents as well," Dummett says.

He's heartened by the country making such a commitment though. When Amnesty came into the country to do research on the problem in 2017, a government official had denied any children were working in mining at all.

What Big Tech Can Do

Darton Commodities, a company that buys and sells metals wholesale, says the world demand for cobalt is growing from 46,000 tons in 2016 to a projected 325,000 tons in 2030. That's a 663 percent increase in only 14 years. In June 2018, at the time of print, a metric ton of cobalt cost \$91,000.

Benchmark Mineral Intelligence analyst Caspar Rawles told *Investing News Network* (INN) that the supply for cobalt could become critical as soon as 2020, when most electric vehicles will come to market.

Cobalt mines do exist elsewhere in

the world; Canada, Australia, and the US all have industrial mines that are far safer than artisanal mines and provide better pay. Even with new mines opening in these countries, both Rawles and Dummett say the demand for DRC cobalt will continue to increase.

"We forecast the DRC to become a bigger part of the cobalt supply pie, to become more dominant in the near term," Rawles told INN. "There is no lithium-ion [battery] industry without the DRC."

Tesla's CEO Elon Musk promises that Tesla will only use cobalt mined in North America for its products, but Dummett thinks that won't be possible because of the outsized portion of the supply that comes from the DRC.

Companies are racing to develop new batteries that use less cobalt content, so they won't have to rely so heavily on the DRC, likely due more to the political instability in the country and the soaring price of the mineral, than to human rights concerns. But because the demand for lithium-ion batteries is so great for the booming electric vehicle market, Dummett says the demand for cobalt will rise even if the amount needed in each battery goes down.

The end game for tech companies wanting to be responsible is to tackle the health, safety, and human rights concerns around DRC cobalt mining.

"It's very difficult for companies which rely on cobalt to avoid DRC cobalt, so they all have to address the problems [with mining in the country]," Dummett says.

In February, Apple announced that it would buy its cobalt directly from miners, instead of buying the complete batteries from manufacturers, which get their cobalt through refiners. Apple is looking to sign contracts for several thousand metric tons per year. Samsung, Tesla, BMW, and Volkswagen are all racing to follow suit, according to reports from Bloomberg.

Companies are making this change because the supply of cobalt is dropping while the demand is skyrocketing, explains Dummett. They're not doing it to improve transparency. That said, by cutting middle merchants, companies are creating a system in which they

RECYCLE YOUR ELECTRONICS!

To reduce the need for new cobalt, it's critical to recycle your old electronics—don't let them sit in a drawer!

- **Find an e-Stewards Recycler:** These recyclers, certified by the Basel Action Network's e-Stewards program, recycle responsibly, in ways that minimize toxic exposure for workers and the Earth, and without shipping recyclables overseas. They also ensure that toxic electronics aren't processed by prison, slave, or child labor. Find an e-Stewards recycler near you at e-stewards.org/find-a-recycler.
- **Drop your old electronics at a Staples store:** All US Staples stores accept old electronics, ink and toner cartridges, and rechargeable batteries for recycling. Staples is an e-Stewards Enterprise, meaning it's committed to using only certified e-Stewards recyclers. Find a Staples near you at staples.com.
- **Become an e-Stewards Envoy.** Envoys are individuals who pledge to reduce, reuse, and recycle their electronics responsibly. They also commit to spreading the word about how e-waste harms workers and the Earth. bit.ly/2xcpDHS.
- You can also **responsibly recycle rechargeable, single-use, and cell phone batteries through Call2Recycle.** Enter your zip code at call2recycle.org to find a battery drop-off box near you. You can also purchase battery-recycling kits from Call2Recycle, including kits for damaged lithium-based batteries.

could have a huge impact on the wages and safety of workers mining cobalt if they wished, as they'd have control over every step of the mining process.

"At the moment, these miners work in dangerous and exploitative conditions, because companies just want to buy the cheapest available cobalt, without caring about where it has



A miner in the DRC holds a cobalt stone.

Lena Mucha

come from,” Dummett says.

If they were working on the ground, big tech companies could create an official industry where right now, artisanal mining is king. They could build mines that would pay adult laborers a fair wage, enough to feed their families and send their children to school, and provide safer conditions for mining.

Companies could also institute electronics take-back programs, to help increase the amount of old electronics that are responsibly recycled. Recyclers remove cobalt and other minerals from electronics so these minerals can be reused, which reduces the need to mine more.

Customers, Take Note

To start creating change in the cobalt industry, Dummett says that companies like Apple that are securing multi-year cobalt supplies first need to zero in on where it comes from, especially if they have no sense now.

Shockingly, 26 out of the 29 companies—including smelters, battery manufacturers, and consumer-facing

tech companies—that Amnesty International contacted about their supply chains said they could not or would not disclose where they got their cobalt. It’s possible that some may not know their full supply chains.

“We think there’s a good chance that cobalt that’s been mined in these dangerous artisanal mines has entered the batteries of every major [tech] company. No company was meeting what we consider to be [best practices for] responsible sourcing of minerals,” Dummett says.

Consumers can do the following to pressure companies to do better for cobalt miners and the Earth:

● **Ask questions:** Dummett encourages consumers to ask tech companies questions, especially because there is no way to avoid cobalt without avoiding tech products altogether. The more companies get the sense that their customers care about cobalt miners, the more likely they are to change their supply chains for the better.

“A key question to ask companies is where they get their supplies from,

and mention cobalt. Ask about tracing and sourcing, and about remediation, and what they’re doing to make things better,” Dummett says. “It has to start with transparency, before you even look at changing conditions on the ground.”

● **Recycle old electronics:** It’s also critical to recycle your electronics. Taking cobalt from a battery where it’s already refined means relying less on new materials from the Earth.

Call2Recycle is one of the largest battery recycling companies operating in North America. Last year, it collected 2.6 million pounds of lithium ion batteries, including cell phone and laptop batteries, and 85,000 of cell phones (It also recycles other types of batteries, including alkaline and nickel cadmium).

Call2Recycle CEO Carl Smith estimates those 2.6 million pounds represent less than five percent of the batteries on the market. He thinks a majority of unused, old batteries sit in drawers, as some folks forget about old technology in their homes, don’t know what to do with it, or are saving it for an emergency.

One thing to be sure of is that any old electronics go to a trustworthy recycler. Some “recyclers” and scrap shops will take used batteries but will ship them to open-air heap recyclers in Asia and Africa, where poorly paid workers will break down the metals with little protection from dangerous chemicals.

See the box on p. 27 to find a responsible recycler.

Recycling e-waste has more benefits than just yielding cobalt and other minerals for reuse. According to the 2017 United Nations report *Global E-Waste Monitor*, the estimated total potential value of materials in world-wide e-waste in 2016 was \$68 billion. For every 1,000 tons of used electronics, 200 repair jobs can be created; a robust recycling system for devices could bring 45,000 new jobs. 🌱

—Eleanor Greene

“We think there’s a good chance that cobalt [from] these dangerous artisanal mines has entered the batteries of every major [tech] company.” —Mark Dummett

“Gun Safety,” continued from p. 9

Utah-based gun-manufacturer.

US outdoor company REI announced it would suspend orders from 50 brands owned by Vista, which include CamelBak water bottles and Jimmy Styk surfboards.

Shortly after Parkland, the NRA came under public fire for its extreme lobbying against gun-safety laws, including opposing measures to create a universal background check system in the US for weapons sales.

#BoycottNRA went viral on social media this spring, which may have at least partly influenced several companies to take anti-NRA action:

- Insurance giant MetLife tweeted that it would no longer offer discounts to NRA members on transportation insurance.

- Other companies ended discounts or deals for NRA members including: Symantec (Norton security software and LifeLock identity-theft services); Enterprise Holdings (Alamo, Enterprise, and National car rental); United Airlines; Delta Airlines; Allied Van Lines; North American Van Lines; TrueCar; SimpliSafe; and Starkey Hearing Technologies.

- And First Bank of Omaha announced in February that it would stop issuing its NRA Visa affinity credit card.

Credit Card Companies

On February 19, journalist Andrew Ross Sorkin, in an op-ed in the *New York Times*, called on the finance industry to “set new rules for the sale of guns in America”.

“Collectively,” he wrote, “they have more leverage over the gun industry than any lawmaker. And it wouldn’t be hard for them to take a stand.”

Sorkin called on the big credit-card companies to refuse to allow their cards to be used by retailers that sell assault-style weapons and accessories.

If that doesn’t work, Sorkin noted that banks and credit-card-processing companies could take steps to prevent their credit cards and card-processing services from being used at such stores.

Finally, he urged retailers like Amazon, CVS, and Apple to pressure the payment-processing industry to act, since they’re among its largest customers.

McDermott says that the media pressure exerted by Sorkin and others “is making [the financial industry] realize we

need to figure this out,” she says.

She also notes that one coalition of responsible investors is currently talking behind the scenes to the big banks, pressing them to ban the use of their cards to purchase assault-style weapons and accessories. And another coalition is talking to big conventional mutual funds about encouraging such action.

In May, members of Green America’s Green Business Network® (GBN) launched a letter asking major financial institutions to restrict the availability of accessories like bump stocks, and to require gun buyers to be at least 21 and pass a background check. (See p. 12.) Individuals can sign our letter to the big banks with a similar ask. (See box, this page and p. 9.)

Social Investors Take Action


Several GBN members in the responsible financial sector have taken action. Many socially responsible mutual funds offer weapons-free options—or, if they do hold weapons companies, it may be for the purpose of exerting shareholder pressure on them as ICCR members did with Dick’s and Sturm Ruger. If you want weapons-free investments, on May 31st, As You Sow  launched WeaponFreeFunds.org, an online tool to help you check whether your mutual and exchange traded funds are exposed to gun manufacturers and retailers.


On March 27th, ICCR and nearly 150 other institutional investors, including many GBN members, released an “Investor Statement on Gun Violence” (view it at iccr.org/investor-statement-gun-violence). The statement called on companies to embrace the Sandy Hook Principles, a set of gun-safety measures for corporations selling guns or ammunition. The principles were named after Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, the site of a school shooting that killed 20 children and six staff members in 2012. The principles encourage steps like developing tech-based safety measures for guns and supporting universal background checks.

“As shareholders concerned about the social impacts of our investments, we believe it is incumbent on all corporate actors to use their power and influence to contribute to the well-being of the communities where they operate and, more broadly, to society as a whole,”

INVESTOR RESOURCES

Use your economic power to pressure companies for common-sense gun safety.

- **Sign Green America’s letter to the big banks** asking them to restrict credit card purchases of assault weapons and accessories. (See p. 9.) greenamerica.org/BanksEndGunViolence.
- **Share Newground Social Investments’  infographic:** which gives a quick visual run-down of how you can start getting weapons out of your investments: bit.ly/2IpXVbP.
- **Divest from weapons:** Since the 1990s, responsible investors have been screening weapons out of their portfolios. You can screen on your own, or get help from a responsible financial advisor. Find one at GreenPages.org.
- **Choose socially responsible funds.** These mutual and exchange traded funds may hold some weapons companies, but it can be because they plan to use their investor power for change. Find them at GreenPages.org and WeaponFreeFunds.org.
- **Vote for responsible shareholder resolutions on weapons.** Visit ShareholderAction.org to view Green America’s list of resolutions to watch, including those on gun safety.
- **Break up with your mega-bank.** Some mega-banks help financially prop up weapons companies and retailers. Find a responsible bank at BreakUpWithYourMegaBank.org.
- **Take charge of your credit card.** By using a credit card from a responsible bank, you’ll know that your credit card fees aren’t bolstering weapons manufacturers and retailers. Find one at TakeChargeofYourCard.org.
- If you own a business that uses credit-card processing services, **consider switching to a responsible processor** like Dharma Merchant Services  (DharmaMerchantServices.com). Dharma does not serve companies that sell weapons or ammunition.

the statement reads. “The dangers presented by gun violence threaten the lives of our children, our communities, and the very fabric of our society. In the coming months, we will be engaging with companies we own to urge immediate and positive action that addresses gun violence.” 

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

Detoxing Electronics

Workers in the factories that make cell phones and other electronics are often exposed to toxic chemicals and labor under sweatshop conditions. Industry collaborations through Green America's Center for Sustainability Solutions are driving change for the better.

E-EDITION
EXCLUSIVE



A worker checks a glass cover plate for Apple's iPhone X in a Chinese supplier factory.

ImagineChina / AP Images

Manufacturing electronic devices such as cellphones and computers involves many hazardous substances. Without proper protection, workers in electronics facilities are at risk for toxic exposure leading to a host of short- and long-term health problems including cancer, reproductive harm, and even death.

Electronics production involves thousands of factories, millions of workers, and production stretching across some 60 countries, so the health impact of chemical exposures on the job is widespread. Historically, many factories in this highly distributed supply chain have lacked adequate protections against the risks associated with chemical exposures.

Many people would prefer to purchase devices that are not produced in such hazardous conditions, but with poor practices common, it's been difficult

to know what to do to help electronics factory workers protect their health and safety on the job.

Green America's Center for Sustainability Solutions is helping to shift the electronics industry onto a more sustainable path.

For the past few years, the Center's Clean Electronics Production Network (CEPN)—a multi-stakeholder group involving major electronics brands and suppliers, labor and environmental advocates, and occupational health and green chemistry experts—has come together to address, and where possible, eliminate toxic chemical exposures to factory workers across the global electronics supply chain.

The Center helps organize diverse stakeholders across a given industry into dynamic collaborations we call "Innovation Networks" to solve the problems no

one business, organization, or individual can solve alone. In the electronics industry and others, this promising approach is helping effect real change. Through CEPN, leading companies like Apple, Dell, HP, Seagate, and Flex, along with other stakeholders, are collaboratively developing solutions to protect supply-chain workers from chemical exposure.

A Collaborative Effort

No one company can drive systemic change through a complex supply chain that allows contract manufacturers and suppliers significant latitude to design their own production processes, as long as the products meet customers' performance standards. Even when a given brand is a major customer in a factory, they are usually one among many, and each may take a different approach to chemical restrictions. So one company's requirement that a supplier eliminate a hazardous chemical, or provide stringent protection for workers, may only affect their own production line(s), with continued use and exposure across the rest of the facility.

In addition, many of the safety violations found upstream in the supply chain are related to ignorance, cost, or other barriers that smaller or less sophisticated suppliers need support and guidance to address. Brand customers, workers, and all stakeholders are better served when such suppliers receive help to replace poor practices with approaches that establish and enforce worker protection.

To solve these challenges and others, it is critical that all stakeholders, including workers, collectively address worker health and safety issues.

Work in Progress

Focusing on a target list of chemicals agreed on by the group, CEPN participants are testing interventions designed

to obtain detailed information on chemicals used in production, and to support supplier progress toward elimination of worker exposures.

One of the fundamental challenges making change difficult is the lack of information on the chemicals used in electronics production, what specific tasks they are used for, and what possible substitutions may exist. One of CEPN's working groups has developed a system to help all parties in the supply chain collect and map process chemical usage in the same way. The new system is meant to permit suppliers to use one set of information for many purposes and multiple customers, in turn allowing electronics brands and suppliers to more efficiently identify and reduce chemical-related risks. Simplifying data collection may also support greater transparency and public disclosure.

The next step is to prioritize action to protect workers. CEPN's Qualitative Exposure Assessment group has developed a simplified approach to performing such a "QEA"—a scheme used by occupational safety experts to rank and prioritize action on eliminating exposure risks in a factory, starting with those that are most potentially dangerous.

Another CEPN small group is working to discover possible chemical substitutions or factory process changes that can help promote alternatives to high hazard chemicals. This group will also educate brands and suppliers on methods to identify potential alternatives themselves and test them for performance compared with the more toxic options in current use.

A group focused on worker empowerment is currently piloting a framework to assess a facility's level of worker engagement on health and safety. The purpose of this diagnostic process is to identify ways suppliers can increase workers' role in helping to protect themselves and others from chemical exposure. In addition, this group intends to track improvements in chemical safety linked to worker involvement, to demonstrate the business value of worker empowerment.

The final small group is investigating the challenges that prevent suppliers from expanding monitoring of worker



THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS

When it comes to creating a more sustainable future, Green America president/CEO Alisa Gravitz likes to say that there are two paths: One involves forging innovative, deep-green solutions that pave the way forward. The second requires diving into problematic areas and making them better. For example, our Green Business Network® members are the sustainability innovators, finding ways to create the green economy of the future. And our corporate accountability campaigns—like the ones that recently drove AT&T to make some commitments to clean up its coal-powered operations—aptly illustrate the power of the second path.

Green America launched our Center for Sustainability Solutions in 2015 as part of our efforts on the second path. But instead of tackling companies one by one, it aims to shift entire industries toward social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

The Center brings together multiple stakeholders—companies, retailers, scientists and researchers, workers, farmers, green experts, and others—across a given sector to collaboratively forge industry-transforming solutions.

For example, you can see from the article at left by Sarah O'Brien, the Center's Clean Electronics Production Network director, that this Network is helping big brands like Apple, HP, and Dell; workers; factory suppliers; and others devise ways to get toxic chemicals out of electronics factories and away from workers.

Our Non-GMO Supply working group brings together farmers, food companies, and others to support a sustainable food system without genetically modified organisms.

Our Carbon Farming Network likewise gathers a similar group of stakeholders to drive climate-cooling restorative agriculture into the mainstream.

Our Midwest Grains Initiative involves these collaborators in getting 5 million more acres of small grains grown in rotation into the upper Midwest by 2021, including by encouraging retailers to increase demand—which will help reduce soil-depleting mono-cropping, help financially shore up Midwestern family farmers, and heal the soil to cool the climate and preserve family farms.

And one of our oldest networks, the Solar Circle, continues our longtime work to grow the solar industry.

"The Center recognizes that markets are a strong force for driving change," says Center director Dave Feldman. "Innovative companies develop sustainable practices, products, and models but need help getting them to scale. The key is engaging strategic players across a supply chain, creating conditions for collaboration, and encouraging a culture of action. Our approach helps them achieve their individual goals and those of the broader community."

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

chemical exposure, and working to identify cheaper, easier, more effective technologies and strategies to verify exposure elimination.

By working together from multiple positions and perspectives, CEPN's members are modeling a new, collaborative paradigm for addressing issues in global supply chains. They are also creating scalable, high-impact solutions that can reduce the barriers to best practices in worker protection—so every company

across this complex industry, from the smallest mom-and-pop manufacturer to the most iconic brands—can move ahead with the information and tools to protect workers.

—Sarah O'Brien, CEPN director

For more information about The Center for Sustainability Solutions' Clean Electronics Production Network, visit our website: CenterForSustainabilitySolutions.org/clean-electronics.

Banks for Gun Safety

My wife and I hold Green America Visa credit cards through Beneficial State BankTM and their partnership with TCM Bank. Andrew Ross Sorkin reported in the *New York Times* that Visa could easily change its terms of service to say that it won't do business with retailers that sell assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and bump stocks. We are hopeful that Green America will support such action.

Rick & Mary Hamilton
E-mail

TRACY: Thank you for your letter, which inspired our article on p. 8 on investing in gun safety. Beneficial State Bank (BSB) recently ended its affinity-card partnership with TCM Bank. TCM now solely offers the Green America Visa. As TCM explained to us, it is not a merchant-acquiring institution that underwrites merchants to accept credit cards, so it cannot establish these type of transaction restrictions. For that, we have to put pressure on Visa itself. Please sign our letter to Visa and other credit card companies asking them to set gun-safety limits for card purchases (see the box on p. 9).

BSB sent a statement to me detailing its gun policy. To view it, visit greenamerica.org/BSBGunPolicy. In brief, the bank has not made loans to the makers of automatic weapons, and it's currently updating its policies to state that it will not make loans in the future to: makers of automatic weapons, makers of gun accessories that enable rapid-fire capability, and companies that sell guns to those under 21 or who have not passed a universal background check.

Worker Victories Worldwide

This issue shows that the world has a long way to go before it achieves justice for all workers. But this year did bring us a little bit closer to that goal. Our editorial fellow Sytonia Reid compiled several worker victories that happened in the past year:

- **Mexican farmers win back stolen wages**—In November 2017, after a month on strike, a group of seven tobacco farmworkers from Mexico holding H-2A temporary work visas won \$20,000 in back wages, plus attorney fees, from a Gerrard County, KY, farm owner. Although the H-2A farmworker minimum wage in Kentucky is \$10.92 per hour, the owner paid farmworkers \$7 to \$8 an hour from 2015 to 2017.

- **German workers win rights**—In February, the German trade union IG Metall struck a deal with employer federation Sudwestmetall to give metal and engineering workers the right to reduce their hours from 35 to 28 per week to care for children, elders, and sick relatives, and grant the workers a 4.3 percent pay raise.

- **Long-overdue protections for LGBTQ workers**—In February, a NY federal appeals court ruled that employers cannot fire workers based on their sexual orientation. The decision followed two earlier federal court rulings that held that the 1964 Civil Rights Act does not prohibit discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

- **Restaurant workers keep ownership of tips**—Many restaurant workers already labor for poverty-level wages even with tips. But last year, the US Department of Labor and the National Restaurant Association tried to drop those wages even lower, proposing a policy allowing restaurant owners to keep their workers' tips. In March, protections to prohibit superiors from taking any portion of their workers' tips received bipartisan support and were included in March's federal Omnibus Budget Bill.

- **Japan's workers get historic pay raises**—In April, Japanese businesses increased wages by an average of 2.41 percent, the highest pay increase the country has seen since 1998.

- **Bangladesh Accord gets more signatures**—Following the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse, the Bangladesh Accord, which requires global retailers to meet protective factory building safety and health standards, has steadily gained more signatures. Most recently, PUMA, the third largest sportswear manufacturer in the world, signed the Accord, bringing total signatories to 161. Activists are still pressuring Abercrombie & Fitch, Gap, and The North Face to get on board. Sign Green America's petition to these three companies at greenamerica.org/BangladeshWorkers.

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy, editor-in-chief
& Sytonia Reid, editorial fellow

TALK TO US!

Join our online discussion on worker justice at 3pm ET August 8th with our editor-in-chief Tracy Fernandez Rysavy and farmworker advocate Rosalinda Guillen. To participate, RSVP online: greenam.org/HiddenWorkers.



TRACY
FERNANDEZ
RYSAVY



SYTONIA REID

Green Tech Growth

I just finished reading the *Green American* ["New Green Tech: Promises and Pitfalls"] from cover to cover and found it exceptionally well done. I enjoyed the broad approach and clearly written articles designed for educated, well-informed non-professionals. You really provide hope for the future.

My husband was owner of a small photovoltaic company, Silicon Sensors. He would have been excited to see how far solar technology has come from bar code readers, dancing beer cans, and fence chargers. Every year since he passed 11 years ago, his employees celebrate his life with a party.

Anne D. Bachner
Dodgeville, WI

TRACY: How lovely that your friends and your husband's colleagues still celebrate him after 11 years. He must have been a very special person, and we're sorry you lost him.



Please send your letters to: Editors, Green America, 1612 K St. NW, Ste. 600, Washington, DC 20006. Or e-mail editors@greenamerica.org. Letters used in this column may be edited for length and clarity. Interact with our editors and staff at [Facebook.com/greenamerica](https://www.facebook.com/greenamerica) and [@greenamerica](https://twitter.com/greenamerica) on Twitter.

LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

YOU CAN HELP GROW A GREEN ECONOMY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.



Include Green America in your will.

In your will, you may leave a specific amount or designate a certain percentage of your assets to Green America. You can also indicate assets of a particular type or reserve a portion of your estate that remains after taxes and expenses are paid. The following bequest language can serve as a guide for including Green America in your will:

"I hereby bequeath to Green America, a non-profit corporation, headquartered in Washington, DC, and with a tax identification number 52-1660746, _____ (insert percentage of estate or dollar amount) to be used for general purposes as determined by the Board of Directors."



Designate Green America as a beneficiary in your life insurance policy, IRA, or retirement.

Your life insurance, IRA, 401(k), or 403(b) plans also allow you to name multiple beneficiaries. You can designate Green America as one of your beneficiaries.



Make a stock gift.

Green America accepts gifts of stock as a charitable contribution. Giving gifts of stock can save you capital gains tax and result in a charitable deduction on your tax return.



If you have questions, want to know more about our Legacy Society, or would like to inform us that you have already designated Green America as a beneficiary in your will or other planned gift, please contact Christy Schwengel at 202-872-5314 or cschwengel@greenamerica.org.



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