Fashion Revolution Day 2015: Fashion Lovers to Demand Global Fashion Industry Cleans Up Its Act

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On 24 April 2015, Fashion Revolution Day, people in 68 countries around the world will challenge global fashion brands to demonstrate commitment to transparency across the length of the value chain, from farmers to factory workers, brands to buyers and consumers.

Transparency is important because it shows a company's willingness to be held accountable for its supply chain and this builds up public trust.

Garment manufacturing is the world's third largest industry, behind automobiles and electronics, worth some $3 trillion.[i] Fashion and textiles is one of the most labour dependent industries on the planet, employing hundreds of millions of people from farm to final product. Yet the people who make our clothes are hidden from us, often at their own expense, a symptom of the broken links across the fashion industry across the fashion supply chain.

This Fashion Revolution Day marks the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza disaster in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which killed 1,133, and injured over 2,500 people. It serves as a stark reminder of the lack of transparency, accountability and human rights that plague the global fashion industry.

Led by some of the biggest names in fashion, Fashion Revolution Day will show that change is possible and celebrate those who are on a journey to create a more ethical and sustainable future for fashion. Model Lily Cole, blogger Susie Lau, Eco Age Creative Director Livia Firth, vloggers CutiepieMarzia, Bip Ling, Noodlerella and actress and model Amber Valletta are just some of the names expected take part in a mass global action challenging brands to tell their customers #whomademyclothes.

On 24 April, fashionistas are asked to join the fashion revolution withfour simple steps:

1. Take a selfie showing your label. You could turn your clothes inside out to make more of a statement.

2. Follow that brand on social media.

3. Upload your photo on social media with this message: "I want to thank the people who made my clothes, @brand #whomademyclothes?"

4. Help make our message louder. Nominate 3 friends to do the same.

The campaign deliberately seeks to engage younger audiences[ii] and will include a range of activities on social media channels including leading vloggers creating #haulternative videos showing an alternative to throwaway fashion on the high street. "Haulternatives" include vintage, second-hand, swish/swap, DIY, investment buy, Fairtrade.

Events to mark the day are being organized around the world by teams in 68 countries.

In the UK they include:

- Rana Plaza 2 Years On – Long Road to Justice Walking Tour Organised by: Labour Behind the Label & War on Want, Oxford Circus, 23 April
- Impossible Swishing Party with Lily Cole and Futerra, Clerkenwell, 24 April
- Designer Jumble, Marble Arch, 24 April
- Clotho Fashion Hackathon, Google Campus, 24 April

Fashion Revolution Advisory Board Members, Livia Firth and Lucy Siegle are the executive producers of a new documentary film, The True Cost, which asks us to consider who really pays the price for our clothing. Funded by the public on crowdsourcing website Kickstarter, the film premieres in London on Fashion Revolution Day, in partnership with Business of Fashion, and will be released worldwide on 29 May 2015. Find the trailer and more information here:http://truecostmovie.com/

The European Commission has signed the 'Sustainability Compact for continuous improvements in labour rights and factory safety in the Ready-Made Garment and Knitwear Industry in Bangladesh', an agreement outlining concrete commitments to improve respect for labour rights, in particular freedom of

association and the right to collective bargaining, improving structural integrity of buildings and promoting responsible business conduct. Brands, trade unions and stakeholders have also signed the Accord to improve health and occupational safety in Bangladeshi factories. These are just two examples of various initiatives in this area in the wake of the Rana Plaza tragedy. Fair Trade Advocacy Office in Brussels is holding an MEP photocall on 22 April for Fashion Revolution Day to encourage support for an EU flagship initiative on responsible management of the supply chain in the garment sector.

These important precedents won't prevent social and environmental catastrophes in our fashion supply chains from continuing. Garment workers in Cambodia work six days a week, earning barely enough to meet their basic living expenses, risking malnourishment, which in recent years combined with poor working conditions has caused numerous incidents of mass faintings and collapses in the factories. An estimated 100 million rural households are involved in the production of cotton in 70 countries around the world, two-thirds in the developing world. More than 250,000 cotton farmer suicides have been recorded in India over the last 16 years in the largest wave of suicides in history. The current situation of West African countries shows the drastic injustice at the basis of the global trade system, an imbalance that the World Trade Organization has so far not been able to address properly. Cotton production accounts for the use of $2bn of chemical pesticides each year.

In addition to more stringent measures to guarantee labour rights and a safe working environment, there is a need to raise awareness of the true cost of fashion and its impact at every stage in the process of production and consumption.

That's why Fashion Revolution's policy demands are centred around two crucial points. Firstly this is an entire value chain problem and we need to build ways to re-connect the broken links along the chain. Secondly, the public needs greater access to information and brands/retailers need to become more transparent so they are able to trace their products and be more accountable for their activities.

Fashion Revolution will also demonstrate that change is possible by showcasing examples of those who are already creating a better future for fashion.

Carry Somers, Fashion Revolution co-founder said: "When everything in the fashion industry is only focused on making a profit, human rights, the environment and worker's workers' rights get lost. This has got to stop. We plan to mobilise people around the world. Buying is only the last step in a long journey involving hundreds of people; the invisible workforce behind the clothes we wear. We no longer know the people who made our clothes so therefore it is easy to turn a blind eye and as a result, millions of people are suffering, even dying".

Orsola de Castro, co-founder said: "Fashion Revolution is about building a future where an accident like this never happens again. We believe knowing who made our clothes is the first step in transforming the fashion industry. Knowing who made our clothes requires transparency, and this implies openness, honesty, communication and accountability. It's about re-connecting broken links and celebrating the relationship between shoppers and the people who make our clothes, shoes, accessories and jewellery – all the things we call fashion."

This is just the start of many years of positive transformation and industry-wide collaboration through Fashion Revolution Day.

Find out more at http://www.fashionrevolution.org/. Like Fashion Revolution on Facebook at facebook.com/fashionrevolution.org and follow @Fash_Rev on Twitter.

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[i] Marketline report, "Global Textiles, Apparel & Luxury Goods" published in May 2012. www.marketline.com

[ii] GlobeScan *Insights Report (*September 2014) shows:

1. Over three quarters (78%) of UK young consumers would take action online to support a good

cause, such as signing an online petition to liking something on Facebook.
2. Issues such as working conditions, inequality and environmental pollution are considered worrying by a large portion of teenagers (between 57% and 60%).
3. There is high expectation that companies should be doing more to behave in an ethical and responsible way. However, trust in companies to act on this is low – 45 percent trust companies to behave ethically, compared to 82 percent overall agreeing that they need to do more. This gap indicates a significant trust deficit amongst this young audience when thinking about the responsibilities of companies today.
4. In line with this expectation, there is appetite amongst teenagers for more sustainable products. This demand is noticeably higher amongst females.

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