Leona Lewis Exposes Child Labour, Cruelty To Animals In Bangladeshi Leather Industry

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PETA Exposé Offers Unprecedented Look at $1.2 Billion USD Industry

Dhaka, Bangladesh – For two years, PETA Germany, with journalist Manfred Karremann, investigated the billion-dollar leather industry in Bangladesh. Now, a new PETA video video narrated by singer Leona Lewis exposes, as she says, "who is paying the highest price for leather": child labourers and the animals who are skinned alive for shoes, belts, jackets, handbags and other products that are exported around the world.

As Lewis reveals, an estimated 2 million cows are transported on severely crowded trucks thousands of miles from India – where it's illegal in most states to slaughter them – to Bangladesh every year. Many arrive with broken tails and open wounds and are so weak and malnourished that they cannot even stand. In abattoirs, or illegally on the streets, their throats are cut with a knife, and some still struggle to escape as their skin is peeled off.

Tanneries use toxic chemicals to prevent animals' skin from decaying. Unprotected workers, including children, stand barefoot as they soak hides in carcinogenic chemicals, cut the skins with knives, and operate dangerous machinery – some losing fingers in the process. The toxic waste is then dumped into the river, which has become a bubbling swamp. Most workers have chronic respiratory problems because of the chemical vapours and lack of ventilation. An estimated 90 per cent of tannery workers die before reaching the age of 50.

"The production of leather hurts animals, workers and the environment", Lewis says in the video. "Please consider the impact that your purchases have, and buy only cruelty-free synthetic, natural fibre and other vegan clothing and accessories."

Lewis is part of a long list of celebrities – including Joaquin Phoenix, P!nk, Natalie Imbruglia, Joss Stone and Charlize Theron – who have teamed up with PETA, whose motto reads, in part, that "animals are not ours to wear".

Broadcast-quality footage is available on request and Photos from the investigation are available here.
For more information, please visit PETA.org.uk.

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