

FASHIONING A JUST TRANSITION

MANIFESTO THEMES



FASHIONING A JUST TRANSITION

The climate crisis and technological change demand a radical overhaul in fashion - one that puts workers' rights and the planet above corporate greed.

We need a transition to a low carbon fashion industry that values people and restores nature, not one that exploits both for profit: A Just Transition to a renewed future of fashion.



WHAT IS THE CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN?

The Clean Clothes Campaign global network (CCC) connects more than 200 organisations in over 40 countries to fight for garment workers' rights.

The network links home-based worker organisations, trade unions, women's organisations, labour rights and feminist organisations and campaigning organisations and activists.

Organisations in the CCC Network are involved in consumer campaigns, worker organising, lobbying governments, pressuring companies and taking up legal and other cases of specific rights violations.

Find out more at cleanclothes.org



WHAT IS THE MANIFESTO ?

The Manifesto, co-developed by young people, workers, Clean Clothes Campaign and allies, will set out core principles to act as a guiding star for a Just Transition to a renewed future of fashion.



GET INVOLVED

Co-create the Manifesto: Read one or more of the themes to kick-start conversations about a Just Transition in fashion and get involved in the discussions - Share your comments on existing themes or start your own thread and create a new prompt. Visit manifesto.cleanclothes.org

Engage in discussion with others: Your comments can relate to incremental changes to the current industry, or a wider vision about the future of the industry.

Stay involved: We can keep you informed about progress and invite you to help prioritise the discussions and give your views on new drafts.

Inspire others: Use the themes in the classroom, with activists, with workers, then share relevant feedback

Take action: Join one of CCC's campaigns, visit cleanclothes.org



THE THEMES

#0 - WHAT IS A JUST TRANSITION IN FASHION ?

#1 - A WORKER-POWERED TRANSITION STARTS WITH FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND CIVIC SPACE

#2 - ONLY A MASS SOCIAL MOVEMENT CAN CHANGE THE EXPLOITATIVE FASHION INDUSTRY

#3 - YES TO GREEN AND JUST FASHION; NO TO GREENWASHED FACTORIES HARBOURING EXPLOITATION

#4 - A JUST TRANSITION MEANS DECENT WORK, DECENT PAY AND DECENT WORKING HOURS - NO OVERTIME, NO OVERPRODUCTION

#5 - MAKE CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS

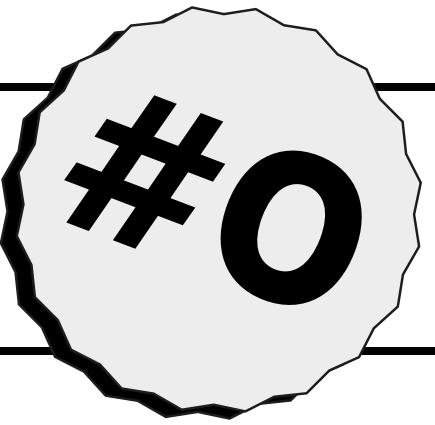
#6 - DON'T MAKE WORKERS PAY FOR THE TRANSITION

#7 - SUPPORT WOMEN ACTIVISTS, TAKE ACTION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

#8 - A JUST TRANSITION FOR EVERYONE



WHAT IS A JUST TRANSITION IN FASHION?

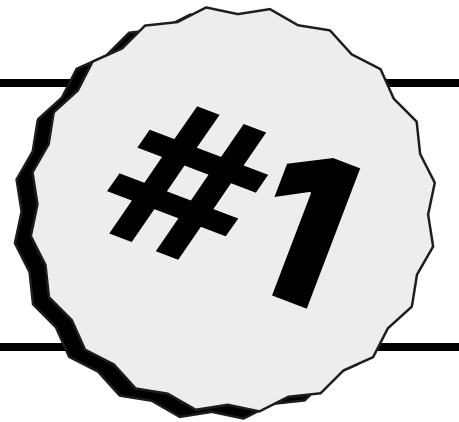


Fashion is changing. The climate and ecological crisis mean change is imperative. Governments, companies and citizens are responding to technological and digital innovations. How can this change happen so people and the planet are put before profit?

The concept of Just Transition emerged in the 1980s from the workers' movement in the United States, in response to regulations on air and water pollution that resulted in the closure of dirty industries and the loss of jobs and income. Well-organized trade unions established the concept of 'Just Transition' to protect jobs, create adequate support where employment was lost and create new decent jobs in low-carbon sectors with living wages, decent work conditions and that were accessible to people with different skills. Since then, the concept was reiterated by trade unions all over the world and entered into the international political arena with the Just Transition Declaration at the COP26 in Glasgow.

In fashion, Just Transition is about ensuring justice during and after the change to a low-carbon fashion system that protects and restores nature - and in the context of technological change. For the Clean Clothes Campaign, justice means respecting and protecting workers' rights, including a living wage, freedom of association, social protection, health and safety, and freedom from harassment and discrimination. It means that companies are held accountable for damage to people and the environment. It also requires repairing the damage done to workers and their communities, both by the climate crisis and by the transformation to a low-carbon industry that protects and restores nature.

A WORKER-POWERED TRANSITION STARTS WITH FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND CIVIC SPACE



Without freedom of association and the right to protest and organise, workers will be left on the receiving hand of the transition. This is why freedom of association is one of the solutions to climate change. Labour rights groups and trade unions are engaging directly with workers and taking action for a Just Transition through research, advocacy, workplace awareness raising, supporting workers in the clean up after disasters and engaging with communities on climate. Trade unions are also bargaining with employers on climate issues. Unions' work for a Just Transition is threatened by union busting and the repression of workers' organisations, targeting of worker leaders and by the gap that exists between technocratic decision making, effective policies and practices and workers' direct experiences.

To enable a worker-centred transition, workers must be able to lead in climate planning and to organise and bargain collectively; trade unions must have an inclusive, nondiscriminatory and participatory seat at the table when decisions about climate transition are being made and workers must be equipped with the knowledge, information, skills and access to legal support needed to be a driving force towards new models of production.

Collective bargaining agreements must be enforceable, and companies must be held to account for human and workers' rights violations, including ecological damage caused by their operations. Workers' organizations and their communities must be able to exercise their right to protest and dissent about all workers' rights and human rights violations, in response to imminent danger and to call on their governments for change. Yet, too often fashion companies have benefited from state repression of environmental and human rights activists to further exploit workers, communities and the environment. Brands exert political and economic pressure internationally and domestically through the promise of investment and the threat of relocation. Experience shows that they generally use their power to influence governments to minimise labour and environmental regulations. Power must be shifted from brands to trade unions, workers' organisations and citizens.

ONLY A MASS SOCIAL MOVEMENT CAN CHANGE THE EXPLOITATIVE FASHION INDUSTRY

The challenges to create a just transition may seem overwhelming, but they will only grow larger if we fail to unite and organise at the grassroots. The current model is based on the exploitation of workers and nature. Workers are often paid poverty wages and work in unsafe conditions, while nature provides the materials for industrial production and is the recipient of the waste generated by industrial processes. The inter-connected crisis we face requires connecting struggles and social movements. It also requires educated and informed citizens in their roles as consumers, citizens, workers or activists, with access to information and transparency. When workers, trade unions, environmental activists, social movements, young people, organised citizens and consumers work together with one purpose, change is possible.



YES TO GREEN AND JUST FASHION; NO TO GREENWASHED FACTORIES HARBOURING EXPLOITATION

Any fix to the climate and ecological crisis that addresses the natural environment while ignoring the exploitation of workers worldwide is not just and is doomed to fail.

If companies are left to make the decisions about how to address the climate and ecological effects of their businesses they will neglect workers' rights. Corporate 'green' programmes have served to fill the pockets of brands, rather than to benefit workers and the planet. While the environmental impact of production may slightly lessen as a result of corporate environmental initiatives, as long as the objective is to maximise profit, workers' rights will continue to be violated and the global climate and ecological crisis will continue to worsen.

Green jobs and the circular economy may protect the environment, but will not improve workers' conditions without a struggle. The movement to a circular economy will bring changes to the way clothes are made and sold, which in turn, will bring changes for workers. New processes such as repair, reuse and recycle can be hazardous and labour intensive, and will require new skills. Existing divides and widespread inequalities, such as those based on geography, class, race and gender, on access to education will also affect access to new jobs and training.



A JUST TRANSITION MEANS DECENT WORK, DECENT PAY AND DECENT WORKING HOURS - NO OVERTIME, NO OVERPRODUCTION



#4

Workers and the planet are being exploited by fashion's obsession with new clothes. We need less production, less overtime, more pay, more freedom. The system that is causing climate change is the same system that is churning out garments at an unprecedented rate in history by paying poverty wages.

Following decades of exploitation and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, fashion companies and governments have left workers and their communities vulnerable to the consequences of the changing climate - even though workers contribute little to the crisis.

Health, safety and wages are directly impacted by overheated and dangerous workplaces as well as flooding, exposure to hazardous chemicals, pests and polluted air and water in workers' homes and communities. The number of workers facing these consequences of the climate and ecological crisis will only increase as the climate crisis unfolds. Impacts go further and affect food security, access to water, migration and remittances. Vulnerability to this crisis is worsened through workers' financial insecurity and material conditions like poor housing. Gender, race, sexuality, employment status, age, migrant status or caste further exacerbate this vulnerability.

At the same time, over-production has turned the fashion industry into a producer of trash, which is in turn destroying ecosystems and communities. The Global South has become a dumping ground for the industry's waste, the same industry paying workers poverty wages and forcing overtime work for unnecessary overproduction. Ultra-fast fashion is only the latest iteration of a model that is unsustainable at its core.

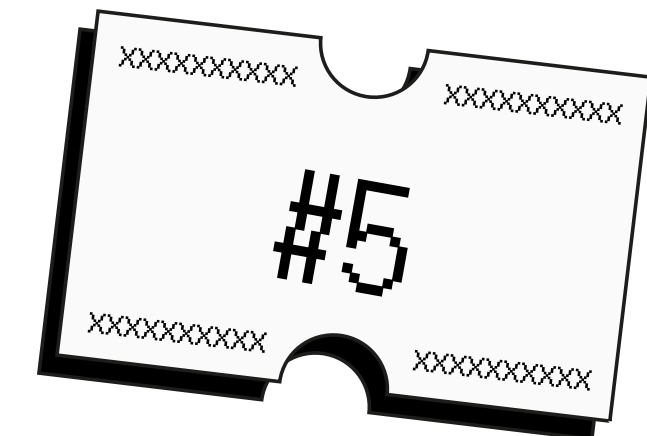
With workers and trade unions at the table, a just transition could mean higher pay, a fairer distribution of the surplus value and a better quality of life and environment - triggering a fall in the volume of mass-produced, ready-made garments. Producing less, more repair, more recycling and repurposing in a way that respects workers' rights can mean different and better jobs, not necessarily fewer jobs if living wages are paid for a standard working week and labour rights are respected.

Significant improvements in the quality of work and likely higher prices for wearers would mean the global industry would contract and reduce the devastating environmental harm it generates. Therefore, living wages, decent and safe working conditions and social protection are the foundation for a more sustainable economy. If accompanied by culturally meaningful and sustainable approaches to fashion, everyone would also get to wear clothes they enjoy, without unnecessary consumption.

MAKE CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS

Brands operate without fear of regulation. They hide behind opaque supply chains and push risks onto suppliers while claiming a disproportionate share of the profits. Suppliers in turn push these risks onto workers and the environment. Meanwhile, workers have few avenues for redress. Transparent value chains, effective and accessible grievance mechanisms and responsible purchasing practices are part of keeping corporations accountable.

Yet, companies cannot be relied upon to change the way they operate voluntarily. Mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence, which centres the involvement of workers and access to remedy is an opportunity to prevent and redress harm done to workers and their communities, both by the climate crisis and by the transition to a low-carbon industry that protects and restores nature. Another opportunity are worker-driven legally binding and internationally enforceable agreements negotiated between unions and brands like the International Accord for Health and Safety in the Garment and Textile Industry. These agreements include a key role for trade unions and are enforceable in a court of law.



DON'T MAKE WORKERS PAY FOR THE TRANSITION

When the going gets tough, companies steal workers' wages and severance pay in the absence of robust social protection for workers. Often under pressure from companies, governments can be unable or unwilling to provide a safety net for workers, and to tax corporate profits in a redistributive way. Business does well from this. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic trade unions and activists put together a plan for a Severance Guarantee Fund that would make it easy for companies to live up to their obligations to provide a social safety net.

Workers will have an increased need for such safety nets in the coming years. Without a worker-centred transition job losses are in sight in the garment sector as climate-related impacts may lead to reduced production, factory relocations or factory closures. Technology is also driving changes to jobs across the industry.

There will be other costs involved in a Just Transition and workers cannot be left to bear this burden. States have a responsibility to protect citizens' and workers' rights, including in case of violation by companies. They should act to protect workers' rights, keep companies accountable and provide comprehensive social protection. States, brands and large manufacturers, insurers and investors have a responsibility to cooperate in order to provide guarantees and resources which overcome national boundaries and cover all workers.

SUPPORT WOMEN ACTIVISTS, TAKE ACTION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

#7

For centuries women have had to endure violence and discrimination, exclusion from spaces of influence and roles of power, and face specific risks and experience higher barriers in seeking justice than men do. Yet, women workers and trade unionists are often front and centre of the struggles for workers' rights.

Few garment workers are paid a living wage, but women garment workers are paid less than men with fewer opportunities of promotion, keeping their wages low. Women are often deprived of social protection, equal treatment and fair labour standards, which can mean no maternity leave, patriarchal settings in decision making, no child care and unsafe travel to work. Some women workers are forced to take mandatory pregnancy tests.

Not only women share a large part of the work in garment value chains, they also often are the backbone of their families and their communities. This unpaid labour, combined with workplace discrimination, means that they are put in a position of higher vulnerability than their male counterparts.

To achieve a just transition, the re-organisation for the fashion industry must be centered around principles of eco-feminism, recognising, valuing and de-gendering work of care for workers and the planet.

We cannot achieve a just world without eradicating sexism, promoting the need for equality and equity on the way to a Just Transition. Policies and practices should promote diversity and inclusion at all levels of the industry. Empowering women workers through capacity development and education on their roles and rights at work is essential in reskilling and upskilling towards a just transition.

A JUST TRANSITION FOR EVERYONE

The struggle for a worker-led just transition in fashion is an intersectional one. Discrimination and exploitation are shaped by multiple forms of oppression including gender, sexuality, caste, race, place of origin, maternity and pregnancy, religion or belief, disability - and more. Home-based, migrant, hostel and informal workers also experience different challenges and forms of exploitation from other workers.

These factors combine to produce different forms of exploitation and discrimination for workers and activists. People may face language barriers, reduced access to education, support networks and social protection. Marginalised groups may also be on the receiving end of harassment and experience legal discrimination and lower wages. These factors directly affect people's ability to act, to speak out for fear of retribution or to be resilient to environmental change.

Fashion brands may paint a rosy picture of their diversity and inclusion policies, but they cash in on exploitative dynamics and the marginalisation of different identities and culture.

There is a need to gather more data about how these intersecting factors increase the ill effects from climate and ecological change, which will be worse if the transition is driven by corporate power.