

Meet your maker

It has now been a year since a factory collapsed in Bangladesh, killing over 1,100 workers. Why haven't our shopping habits changed to reflect this?

By [Ellie Rice](#), Comment Editor (2013/14)

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A year on from [the factory collapse in Bangladesh](#) which killed more than 1,100 workers and injured a further 2,000, have consumer habits changed to reflect the concerns raised at the time about the poor working conditions of those who make our clothes? In short, no. It is still too easy to forget that real people were involved in making those garments, and those people are not always well protected by their employers.

Most of those brands whose workers were caught up in the disaster have made only superficial effort to change their ways. Walmart, along with 14 other North American companies, refused to sign the [Accord on Factory and Building Safety in Bangladesh](#), later making their own, less stringent, plans. Self-policing will allow these companies to continue to get away with flexing the rule book. The Chicago Tribune published a story on Thursday quoting that "to date just half of the 29 brands connected to factories in the Rana Plaza complex have publicly made commitments to the Donor Trust Fund, according to the Clean Clothes Campaign, a garment labor group." If such shallow and half-hearted attempts to rectify the situation are the best the industry can offer, it isn't any wonder that consumer habits have not changed.

It's too easy to nip to town and pick up something new, easier still to have it delivered to your door. Taking a more ethical route, hunting through vintage and charity shops, boycotting certain stores and reviving what you already have can be tiresome. But we must make the change; a new pair of leggings is not worth someone risking their health, education or future for.

Projects such as Fashion Revolution have been harnessing the power of every 21st century campaigner's best friend, social media to ask "who made your clothes?" with the hashtag #insideout. A powerful question, encouraging the public to get curious and engage with the world around them, instead of taking it for granted that they can go pick up something snazzy on their lunch break.

The project is hitting the perfect target audience, young generation Y's with a love of insta, fashion and all things ethical. I think over time this campaign could effectively raise awareness of the issue, but by leaving a question mark over what action consumers should be expected to take it is yet another case of all talk and no trouser. Reaching out the companies is not going to change their policies, they exist to make a profit and know that our love of a bargain will keep us coming back. Sadly, I think it will take many more tragedies like the Rana Plaza complex collapse before attitudes and actions change for the better.



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