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We Are What We Wear: Unravelling Fast Fashion And The Collapse Of Rana Plaza



Synopsis

Fashion is many things. It is self-expression, big business, trend-setting, a lifestyle choice. But however you see fashion, it relies on one simple characteristic: the incredible speed with which clothes make their journey from the drawing board to the High Street hanger. Fashion is fast. Fast fashion influences the types of garments we have in our wardrobes. It also describes the complex, multi-national supply chain that links the shirt on your back to the crowded, creaking factories in the world's slums where clothes are made by a workforce numbering in the tens of millions. The manufacturing pressures that come from our deep love of incredibly cheap, incredibly current fashions were shot to global attention in 2013 when the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital city, collapsed in a cascade of tumbling rubble, twisted metal and trapped bodies. Over 1,100 people died, mainly young women. *We Are What We Wear* is the story of what happened in Bangladesh and how fast fashion has grown to become the giant that it is today. The intimate accounts from the survivors of the collapse are mixed with an exploration of the history of fast fashion and of how the High Street both fuels and satisfies our every fashion wish. Award-winning reporter Jason Burke picks his way through the day of the collapse, while fashion and consumer expert Lucy Siegle looks at what has happened since - and what needs to happen next.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An excellent introduction to the global dynamics, and moral ambiguity, of fast fashion (think Zara,

H&M, Topshop, etc.). Set in the context of the Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh where over 1,100 garment workers died almost exactly one year before this book was published. The larger story is the huge economic pressure placed, primarily by the fast fashion segment of the apparel industry, on the lowest cost geographical areas of the supply chain. Right now that area is Bangladesh, a poor country suffering from weak infrastructure and trying to deal with the huge growth of their garment industry. And this is what the author outlines as a far-from-clear moral choice: fast fashion is the growth engine that is on track to lift Bangladesh from poverty to a "middle income" country, so as a consumer should we avoid fast fashion and reduce the prospects for Bangladesh and countries like it? Or engage as consumers with fast fashion and watch as disasters such as Rana Plaza unfold? After reading this book, one thing seems almost certain. This story is bound to move from Bangladesh to the next low cost labor center as Bangladesh leverages its economic success. Who will be next, Africa? And will any lessons have been learned by the global fast fashion industry or us as consumers? Or will the disasters just get larger? For the story on the move from fashion as a domain of the wealthy to the middle class and the rise of fast fashion, read "Deluxe - How Luxury Lost Its Luster". For a broader look at the global fast fashion industry read "Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion".

Lucy is so passionate about the struggles of garment workers. What happens when they no longer have a job? They can eat this book.

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