

Disclosure alone won't reform sweatshops

A recent editorial on University licensees' disclosure (Jan. 7, ODE) greatly misrepresents the stance of the Human Rights Alliance and tackles a subject that is out of the understanding of the editorial board. As a member of the HRA, I'm slightly offended. The amount of the disclosure required by the University will only minimally add to the next step of monitoring. Factory site locations alone will not prevent companies from using sweatshop labor. Disclosure should include items such as wages, condition number of employees, transportation of factories, the cost of company-supplied housing, standards for women's rights and other aspects.

I understand this is a small step in a long process, but the process is not moving at the immediacy of the situation. When people say, "Slow down, you move too fast," in regard to injustice issues, they immediately lose sight of the fact that people are suffering because of the injustices, but for some reason we need to move slower. In

the words of MLK Jr., "... Actually time itself is neutral. Time can be used either constructively or deconstructively." He said this in reaction to the white moderate's call for a slower timeline when blacks wanted segregation ended.

An appropriate timeline is exactly what the HRA was planning for when it made its demand of disclosure three months ago. It's already January and we have just gotten disclosure. In retrospect, other schools where students have chosen to forego the channels of so-called democracy by not dealing with advisory committees are already conducting studies into the finer points of the movement.

We have been asking for disclosure for more than a year and because we as students have very limited power, it has taken the administration this long to require something that should have been required last year. We carefully calculated our demand — labeled arbitrary by some — taking into consideration the three-month

COMMENTARY
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time period that the companies are allotted to disclose. We will have the minimal disclosure information in March, which leaves us four months of the school year instead of six months to work with the information.

This is not enough time because the next committee meeting is Jan. 28, and considering we have only met twice, waiting a month is hardly timely and certainly not efficient.

I would like to take a moment and describe the over-shadowing principles of the anti-sweatshop campaign, a major student movement across the country. In the past, administrations at other universities have only changed policy in response to "raucous crowds" that would partake in protests such as sit-ins, rallies and demonstrations. But the most im-

portant aspect of the movement is that students do not have democratic power at the University. All decisions regarding University direction and practices are made by one person.

The committee working on the sweatshop campaign should be a decision-making body rather than an advisory body. It should be a decision-making body because it has representation from the whole University community. There are countless examples of administrations across the country who come over the top of student and faculty movements to shut them down. A close-to-home example is the Riverfront Research Park.

In my opinion, the role of the administration is to facilitate what the students and faculty want, not rule it out. Students have little voice at universities and student voices are continually limited by attacks on student fees and advisory committees that have no power. Surely, a student newspaper should support the

students and student democracy. Stating ill-informed opinions about a student movement that represents more than just sweatshops is not only detrimental to progress but attacks the hard work of students.

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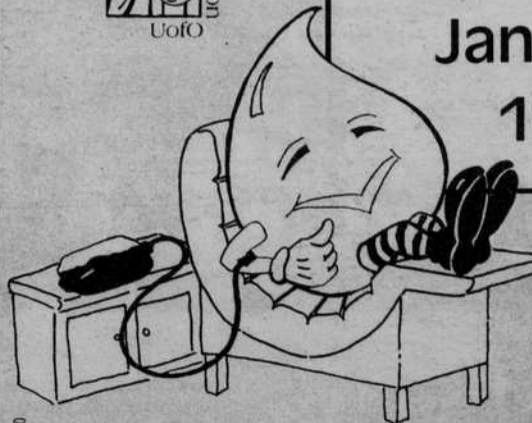
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