

My SGAP Experience: An Introduction to Fair Trade

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As I walked into the NYC Fair Trade Coalition event, I had a limited viewpoint about what fair trade represented domestically to internationally and vice versa. I believed fair trade represented the exchange of goods and services between America and other countries. What I wasn't aware of was how unfair the marketplace can be to certain companies that seek to have fair trade. Attending this event opened my eyes to the realization that fair trade is not only beneficial to the manufacturer in third world countries, but to everyone.

Fair trade businesses make sure wages are decent for the workers in different countries, and that their product is exactly as described. At the event, the fair trade businesses that reside in New York were Bhoomki, Global Goods Partners, Kopali, and Stellar Organic Wine. There was a table with delicious chocolates that were organic and fairly traded, a table for bags and accessories which were all made with recycled materials and used Ugandan traditional weaving techniques, and a table for wines - all made in South Africa. The speakers really enlightened me about what goes on in the world of fair trade and how it relates to their businesses. Each business ensures their items are fairly traded, are labeled "fair trade" so consumers can check to see if the product is organic and recycled. In addition, the business owners include in their labels where the product is made; also, the owners ensure that the consumers pay a fair amount for the product. The price of the product must be fair for the worker and for the consumer - meaning that the workers are getting a regular day's pay for their work and the consumers are getting what they desire.

I definitely want to support fair trade businesses. I think recommending fairly traded businesses to teens would definitely raise each teen's awareness about the benefits of fair trade businesses. Teens spend about 53% of their money on clothing, food, and accessories (businessinsider.com). Interestingly enough, most fair trade products are clothing, food and accessories. Promoting fair trade businesses and products to teens who are most likely to spend money on clothing, food and accessories would definitely increase sales and awareness of fair trade businesses-benefitting the businesses domestically and internationally. Now that I am aware of how beneficial and sustainable these businesses are I will make a greater effort to find products that have been fairly traded.