

21W.011 Fall 2015 Homework Due: Thurs. 10/15

Respond to the quote below; do you agree or disagree with Kristof? In your response, also incorporate the Yesilevsky reading.

From Nicholas D. Kristof, “Where Sweatshops Are a Dream” (*New York Times*, 1/15/2009)

The central challenge in the poorest countries is not that sweatshops exploit too many people, but that they don't exploit enough. Talk to these families in the dump, and a job in a sweatshop is a cherished dream, an escalator out of poverty, the kind of gauzy if probably unrealistic ambition that parents everywhere often have for their children. “I'd love to get a job in a factory,” said Pim Srey Rath, a 19-year-old woman scavenging for plastic. “At least that work is in the shade...”

I'm glad that many Americans are repulsed by the idea of importing products made by barely paid, barely legal workers in dangerous factories. Yet sweatshops are only a symptom of poverty, not a cause, and banning them closes off one route out of poverty. At a time of tremendous economic distress and protectionist pressures, there's a special danger that tighter labor standards will be used as an excuse to curb trade. When I defend sweatshops, people always ask me: But would you want to work in a sweatshop? No, of course not. But I would want even less to pull a rickshaw...

The best way to help people in the poorest countries isn't to campaign against sweatshops but to promote manufacturing there.”

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