

Gap Campaign 2001 – Media Guidelines

Purpose: Use these guidelines to get the media (radio, TV, and newspapers) to publicize your action—the guidelines include how to write a letter to the editor, contact the media, write a press release, submit PSAs, and post to community calendars (print & online). Using the media to publicize your action gets the message to more people, but it is not necessary for the success of your action! A single person can distribute hundreds of leaflets in a matter of hours—*THAT's a successful action!*

About letters to the editor. This really works and is GREAT for outreach. Let the editors of all your local newspapers—especially the alternative, progressive press, if there is any in your town—know when and where you are planning to leaflet the Gap (or do some other Gap action), and *why!* Call up the newspapers and get their email address (fax or snail-mail) for letters, then write your letter and *keep emailing* (or faxing/snail-mailing) it everyday, if possible, until they respond to you. If possible, give yourself some lead time, such as one to three weeks before your action. If you are a student, be sure to send your letter to your college paper as well!

Sample letter to the editor. Usually letters *must be* 280 words or less. Following is a good sample letter (277 words). Feel free to use any or all of it, substituting information about your action. Note, you must include your name, address, and phone number or they won't publish it!

Dear Editor,

I want to encourage people to shop with conscience this year—that's why I'm planning to leaflet at the Gap on Main Street every Saturday from 12 to 2 PM throughout the month of April. The way we spend our consumer dollars can change corporate policies that are destroying the environment and exploiting desperately poor people.

Gap, Inc (Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy), the biggest clothing retailer in the US, is notorious for using sweatshop labor to produce its goods, while putting on a caring, progressive face. Similarly, it is well documented that the Fisher family, founders and major shareholders of Gap Inc, is damaging redwood forestland in California with clearcutting, old-growth logging, toxic herbicide application, and overlogging.

It appears that the two-year-old consumer-pressure campaign is working, with Gap profits down 32%. Organizers say that if enough shoppers-with-conscience avoid Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy stores this year, the Fishers and the Gap will change their exploitative policies in forest and factory: They will make their forestland a desperately needed wildlife refuge and pay their contract workers a living wage.

Wouldn't it be great if we gave the gift of life to these endangered species and ensured a living wage and some dignity for Gap garment workers this year? If consumers win this campaign for redwoods and workers, other irresponsible corporations will sit up and take notice and put human needs and the environment before profits, too. It's so easy: Just don't shop at Gap, Banana Republic, or Old Navy!

For more info on the Gap Sweatshop Campaign, check out www.globalexchange.org. For more information on the Save-the Redwoods/Boycott the Gap Campaign, check out www.elksoft.com/gwa.

—John/Jane Q. Activist, Address, Phone

Getting Media to Your Demo. Leafleting is a very powerful tool for outreach—and all you need is one person and some leaflets! However, if you want to put on a more elaborate demo,

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here are some guidelines for getting the media to cover it—and thereby reaching a lot more people. Three things seems to attract the media to a demonstration: Spectacle (props, costumes, music, dance, skits), Numbers (lots of demonstrators), or Arrests. We focus on the first two. Fun props (such as giant cardboard sewing machines!) and costumes (such as redwood trees!), songs (familiar tunes with clever lyrics), music (a boom box suffices), dance, and/or a skit are sure-fire ways to get media to your demo (check out the gapsucks web site for lots of headline-grabbing ideas). If you think you can get 100 people to your demo, that's a big media draw also. Following are guidelines for contacting the media and a sample press release.

Contacting the Media. There are many styles and formulas for success with the media, but the following has worked well for us:

- 1.) Get the phone and fax numbers of the major print, radio, and TV stations in your town—be sure to ask for the phone and fax numbers of the “News Desk.” (We have a short list of about 12 venues in the San Francisco Bay Area, whom we regularly contact when we are having a demo.)
- 2.) Fax your press release (see below) to the media on the morning of the day *before* your demo (you'll have to go to a copy place that does faxing if you don't have access to a fax machine).
- 3.) Call the News Desk between 12 and 2PM the day before your demo, and remind them that you are having a demo—*lure them* with the promise of SPECTACLE (give colorful or amusing details) and/or NUMBERS, if you are expecting to have at least 50—100 people.
- 4.) Fax your press release again on the morning of your demo.
- 5.) Call the News Desk on the morning of your demo—after you have sent the fax—and remind them about the stupendous action you have planned (include those amusing details in your pitch)!

Tips: *Don't be discouraged by any “hardboiled” attitude you may encounter—try not to act miffed if they blow you off—just be cheerful and persistent! Even if they aren't sympathetic, they may end up covering your action if they are having a “slow news day.”*

Sample Press Release. Press releases should look and sound like newspaper articles—pretend you are a good journalist while you write it. You should start it with an attention-grabbing headline that reflects your action, such as “Protestors strip in front of Gap store.” In the body of your press release, you should highlight the attention-grabbing elements of your action (“A chorus of twelve redwood trees will encourage shoppers to boycott Gap this Saturday...”); then plunge into the facts, in a neutral tone of voice. Include a few quotes—your own or those of other protestors—that make it personal, for example: “ ‘I think we should use our shopping dollars like votes—don't spend them at stores that are hurting people or destroying nature!’ said, Jane Q. Activist, a student at City College, who's planning to join the protest.” Typically, press releases are double-spaced, and no more than two pages long. Here's a fun one we used over the holidays (note the format):

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

From: Union of Concerned Santas

Contacts:

-Mary Bull, Save the Redwoods-Boycott the Gap office 415-731-7924 cell 415-509-1188

-Mary Pjerrou, Redwood Coast Watersheds Alliance (707) 877-3405

-Mark Hilovsky, General Contractor, Green Builder cell 415-793-6187

More Information: www.gapsucks.org

To: All media

Date: 12/15/00

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Union of Concerned Santas refuses to deliver gifts purchased at Gap, Banana Republic, or Old Navy

Santas turn out in force to urge shoppers to boycott Gap, cite deforestation, sweatshops

-12 Noon, December 16, Union Square, San Francisco-

When the Fisher family of San Francisco purchased 235,000 acres of cutover redwood forestland in July 1998 and continued to log it, environmentalists launched an international consumer-pressure campaign targeting the family business, Gap, Inc (Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy). The announcement last month that the Fishers' logging venture now has a "green label" has not lessened their critics' insistence that the Fishers, who are worth a reported 12.5 billion dollars, turn their redwood holdings into a wildlife refuge, which activists say is desperately needed in California's Coast Redwood region, where less than 3% old-growth remains.

Mark Hilovsky, a Bay Area general contractor and green builder explained why, "We have long suspected that the Forest Stewardship Council 'green-label' certification process cannot be trusted as a guarantee of sustainably logged wood. Their certification of the Fishers is the final blow to their credibility."

"The green-label is just another P.R. gimmick—paid for by the Fishers" said Mary Pjerrou, President of the Redwood Coast Watersheds Alliance. "The P.R. doesn't work with us: Our group reads their timber harvest plans, the actual documents that permit logging. They can't hide these numbers—over 200 logging plans, 80% of them containing some form of clearcutting; twelve Fisher logging plans in one creek where the number of endangered Coho salmon has plummeted from ten to zero. It's hard fact that the Fishers are extinguishing endangered species."

In 1999, the campaign was broadened to include Gap's use of sweatshop labor, when human rights groups filed a class-action lawsuit against Gap and other retailers for their labor practices on Saipan. "All Gap clothes are made in sweatshops by desperately poor people," said Mary Bull, Coordinator of the Save the Redwoods/Boycott the Gap Campaign, "We're escalating our campaign for the redwoods and workers' rights this holiday season. There have already been more than 20 demonstrations at Gap stores around the continent, including Winnipeg! And we are expecting to see at least 50 Gap protest actions before the end of the holidays—quite possibly more—we can't keep up with all the email! Our youngest Gaptivist is 10-year-old Liam of the Isle of Arran, Scotland, and we just got our first French activist—we'll be seeing a 'Boycott the Gap' banner hanging from the Eiffel Tower yet!" Bull quipped.

This could be bad news for the Fishers and Gap, Inc, with the ailing corporation's third-quarter profits already down 41%.

The Union of Concerned Santas joined the Campaign last December, when nine members were arrested for locking down in front of the Old Navy flagship store in San Francisco, preventing customers from entering. They issued the following statement to the Fisher family: "Extinguishing endangered species and exploiting desperately poor people just isn't in the Christmas spirit." (All charges were dropped due to public outcry at the prospect of Santa being jailed over Christmas.) This year the Santas and elves will be handing out alternative shopping guides while singing customized Christmas carols that educate shoppers about Fisher deforestation and Gap sweatshops.

Bull added, "It's great to have the Santas back with us this year—they have very good hearts, you know, and they're great judges of character—they know who's been naughty or nice."

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About TV and radio PSAs. Another way to publicize your event is through Public Service Announcements. Radio and TV stations are obliged to devote a certain amount of air-time for public

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benefit (after all—they are using OUR AIR WAVES). They usually require that you get your PSAs to them *at least two weeks* before you want them to air; so, three weeks before your demo. They ask for 10-second, 15-second, and 30 second announcements (see samples below). Target the major public and private radio stations, college radio stations, and public television stations!

Contacting the PSA department at the station. It's best to phone the station and speak with the head of the PSA department. Ask this person for the station's PSA guidelines, and tell them how important your event is: Attempt to make positive personal contact—get them invested if possible—this helps you get your PSA aired, and they may have you on for an interview, as well!

Sample PSAs. Following are the PSAs we used for the Gap Boycott kickoff rally in Nov 1998. Note that stations usually like the PSAs double-spaced for readability and a couple of variations for the different time slots! (Note: The sweatshop movement wanted to hold off joining us till Jan 99, when the class-action suit against Gap was filed—that's why no mention of sweatshops in these early PSAs.)

10 sec PSAs:

1. Celebrate the Redwoods - Boycott the Gap, with SF Mime Troupe! Bagpipes! Lindy Hop dancers! Union Square, San Francisco, Friday, November 28, 12:00 noon. More info: (415) 731-9062.
2. Celebrate the Redwoods - Boycott the Gap, with Starhawk! Julia Butterfly! Bagpipe Parade! Union Square, San Francisco, Friday, November 28, 12:00 noon. More info: (415)-731-9062.

15 sec PSA:

Celebrate the Redwoods - Boycott the Gap! Lindy Hop dancers and bagpipes will lead a rally and march to save the Redwoods, at Union Square, San Francisco - Friday, November 28, 12:00 noon. The rally protests the logging of Mendocino redwood forests by the Fisher family, founders of Gap clothing stores. More info: (415)-731-9062.

30 sec PSA:

Celebrate the Redwoods - Boycott the Gap - on Friday, November 28 - at Union Square, San Francisco, 12:00 noon. Join SF Mime Troupe, Lindy Hop dancers, Art & Revolution, Julia Butterfly, and Starhawk to protest the logging of redwood forests by the Fisher family, founders of the Gap clothing empire. The 12:00 noon November 28 rally at Union Square, San Francisco—and simultaneous rallies in Peoples' Park in Berkeley, and around the country—mark the beginning of a nation-wide Save the Redwoods/Boycott the Gap Campaign. For information about these events, call (415) 731-9062.

Posting Announcements on Community Calendars. Many neighborhood and alternative press newspapers publish calendars of events. In addition, there are usually several online calendars and lists to whom you can send announcements. Find out who these are in your town, call or email them for calendar deadlines and posting guidelines, and send them an announcement of your event.

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