

IS SHEIN OUT? PROTESTORS WOULD ‘RATHER BE NAKED’ THAN USE THE FAST-FASHION SITE FROM CHINA

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With Earth Day and the demand for more sustainable practices in mind, students took to the streets of Los Angeles on April 22 to protest Shein, an e-retailer in China, and the fast-fashion industry as a whole.

With fashion ranking as the world's third-largest polluting industry, eco-conscious consumers are calling out apparel manufacturers and retailers, demanding more sustainable practices and eco-friendly processes. The students in LA, protesting in front of the Shein Distribution Corporation, were joined by protesters in the U.K. who rallied against BooHoo.

The protest was led by advocate Lexy Silverstein, a sustainable fashion activist, with the support of Remake, a global non-profit pushing for a kinder, cleaner fashion industry.

“Shein represents all fast fashion,” Silverstein said. “The reason why I’m talking about Shein is because they are the biggest fast-fashion giant. But everything I say applies to all fashion brands, and, most specifically, fast-fashion brands. But I’m targeting the biggest offender so if I make a dent in Shein’s bottom line, maybe they’ll be forced to change their ways.”



Protesters arrived dressed in robes and towels, symbolizing a global call for change with signs bearing the message: “I’d Rather Be Naked Than Wear SHEIN.” Their presence echoed their demand for accountability, fair labor practices and environmental stewardship in fashion production.

Among chants, such as “There is no Planet B,” “Stop Shein’s greed, support workers’ needs,” and “Hear our shout, Shein out,” protestors voiced their demands for Shein, which include:

- Transparency on supply chain, wages and chemicals used in manufacturing
- End greenwashing “sustainability efforts” and make real change
- Commitment to sustainability with third-party validation
- Stop promoting hyper-consumerism
- Pay its workers a fair wage
- Prioritize the well-being of both the planet and its workers

“Our LA hub is full of amazing ambassadors like Lexy, who has been coordinating this entire event,” said Harmony Richards, co-community organizer, Remake Los Angeles. “We value supporting ambassador-led advocacy events as much as coordinated global events. We stand by our saying, ‘Wear Your Values.’ Shein is notorious for poor labor practices, design theft, and overall perpetuating overconsumption.”

This isn’t the first time e-commerce giant Shein has been in hot water with protestors and green-minded consumers. Protestors gathered outside one of its pop-up stores in May 2022, and the company has been called out for producing “an astounding number of items on a daily basis,” according to Time, which pointed out that the apparel juggernaut’s “rapid use of virgin polyester and large consumption of oil churns out the same amount of CO2 as approximately 180 coal-fired power plants.”

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“The fast-fashion industry has a substantial environmental footprint, making it one of the largest consumers of water globally,” Silverstein said. “It is a major source of pollution, both water and air, due to the chemicals used in dyeing and treating fabrics. Additionally, the fashion industry, especially fast fashion, contributes heavily to global carbon emissions and generates enormous amounts of textile waste. Much of this waste is non-biodegradable

and ends up in landfills, exacerbating environmental degradation. Beyond the environmental impact, fast fashion is notorious for its alleged exploitation of labor. Workers in this industry often face unhealthy working conditions, receiving low wages for long hours and operating in unsafe environments.”

Apparel e-giants like Shein and Temu have been hot topics of discussion within the gift industry, as well, with industry experts pointing out their threat against independent retailers and wholesalers alike.

“The longer-term or more macro trends [of challenges to our industry] in my mind boil down to disintermediation broadly and supply chain innovation putting pressure on independents who are in need of both margin and foot traffic,” said John Toler, CEO of Evergreen Enterprises in an interview earlier this year with GDA.

“Here comes the latest model to disintermediate all of us – China-based ... platforms like Temu and Shein where they are literally packing orders on the factory floor, using new supply chain models to deliver those goods to end consumers within seven days, and using this reduction in total supply chain expense to produce some compelling retails, while the app has nearly infinite product assortment.”

Toler and Warren Shoulberg cohosted an educational webinar April 9 for GHTA members on the future of the gift and home industry, which delved into the implications of Chinese e-commerce sites such as Shein and Temu.
