

IT'S GIVING... FAST FASHION FLOP: THESE EARTH DAY PROTESTERS WOULD "RATHER BE NAKED THAN WEAR SHEIN" (EXCLUSIVE)

STUDENT PROTESTORS SHOWED UP OUTSIDE OF SHEIN'S LA OFFICES IN NOTHING BUT TOWELS AND ROBES.



Just the words "fast fashion" are enough to make eco-conscious shoppers shudder. As a subject of great debate, the rise of fast fashion brands like Shein and Brandy Melville has stoked a fire in activists calling out companies for their exploitative practices and harmful environmental footprints.

So on Earth Day 2024, protestors picketed outside of Shein's downtown headquarters in Los Angeles in towels and bathrobes. The group hoped to raise awareness of fast fashion's exploitation and demand better — and because they'd "rather be naked than wear Shein!"

To learn more, Green Matters spoke exclusively with the protest's organizer Lexy Silverstein, who partnered with nonprofit Remake to organize this protest, in tandem with a similar protest in the U.K. at Boohoo's doors.

Protestors picketed Shein headquarters in downtown Los Angeles on Earth Day 2024.

Protestors led by activist Lexy Silverstein stationed themselves in front of Shein's LA offices at 1 p.m. local time on April 22, 2024. The activists wore bathrobes, towels, and sheets, to accentuate their message that going without clothes is better than wearing Shein.

According to a press release, the protestors called on the fast fashion giant to take four action items: stop greenwashing, become more transparent about its supply chains and practices, ensure fair pay and safe working conditions for employees, and stop mass-producing disposable clothing.

Silverstein wore a white robe onto which artist Emily Blair graffitied the phrase "F--k fast fashion." She also held a handmade placard that read "No, I don't want to see your Shein haul," calling out the Shein shoppers who post social media videos of their massive Shein orders.

Other signs at the demonstration included phrases like "Fast fashion doesn't go with my outfit," "Sustainability is hot," "Sex is cool but have you ever f--ked the system?" and "Fast fashion is not cheap, someone somewhere is paying."

It's unclear if Shein employees responded to the protest — but it's highly likely that staffers saw it from their office windows.



Why Shein? Lexy Silverstein first spoke out against the company after the brand partnered with her college.

Silverstein knew right away she wanted to go to the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM) after entering a room about the future of fashion "where clothes and shoes were made from sustainable and biodegradable materials like mushrooms and pineapple."

However, during her school years, Silverstein discovered that FIDM was partnering with Shein for a scholarship program called "SHEIN Project Launchpad." This program selected 12 students to receive \$40,000 scholarships and the chance to create a small collection for Shein.

"I totally supported scholarship money for students. But the partnership needed to be with a more sustainable fashion brand," she tells Green Matters. As a result, Silverstein started a petition signed by thousands of students that later gained national attention.

Thankfully, FIDM agreed to make the partnership a one-time deal and include student perspectives in future programs.

As arguably the biggest fast-fashion retailer in the game, Shein has faced serious accusations of human rights abuses and stealing designs from smaller businesses, among a laundry list of other issues.

Silverstein and her fellow activists hope the Earth Day protest will raise awareness of fast fashion's issues.

First and foremost, Silverstein hopes that the Earth Day protest encourage people to stop shopping at Shein.

The protest's second goal is to send Shein a message to "demand transparency, an end to greenwashing, and a genuine commitment to sustainability. It's time for SHEIN to take responsibility for its actions, stop promoting hyper consumerism, and prioritize the well-being of both the planet and its workers."

Shein specifically "exemplifies the extreme end of fast fashion," Silverstein says, as the company produces an astronomical amount of clothing, "2,000 to 10,000 new items each day", signaling high waste and using non-sustainable materials. Not to mention, in addition to allegations of labor violations, Shein has been accused of using toxic chemicals, per Good on You, which harm both the consumer and the laborers.

Silverstein emphasizes the accusations of greenwashing Shein also faces and states that in a recent attempt to pull up Shein's Sustainability and Social Impact Report on its website, she "couldn't even get to the report." As of publication, the page is still down.

This article is part of Green Matters' 2024 Earth Day programming, It's Giving... Earth Day: A series about the people and organizations who are "giving" Earth Day 24/7. We hope these stories inspire you to embody the spirit of Earth Day all year round.