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GWU Senior's Research Examines How Fast Fashion Violates Human Rights Laws BY OFFICE

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UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

GWU Senior’s Research Examines How Fast Fashion Violates Human Rights Laws

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 22, 2020



Carlee Winstead, ’21, Also Studies Impacts of Globalized Capitalism

Gardner-Webb University senior Carlee Winstead, of Wilmington, N.C., plans a career in the field of social justice. “Ideally, I want to work for an organization that advocates for policy reform that would better the lives of those who are disproportionately at risk in their communities,” she affirmed. “All people are deserving of justice, and nothing should stand in the way of them not being equal to the person next to them, especially policies that exist in those communities.”

Because of her deep convictions, Winstead wanted to focus her GWU Undergraduate Research Project on human rights issues. She proposed to find out how many human rights laws are violated in order for a national clothing chain to sell a basic T-shirt. Her project was one of 11 accepted by the [Undergraduate Research Scholars Program](#). She received a grant to conduct research for five weeks under the guidance of a GWU faculty member. Winstead’s mentor was Dr. Casey Delehanty, assistant professor of political science.

Winstead, ’21, is a global studies major with a concentration in intercultural studies and a minor in political science. After completing her bachelor’s degree, she plans to attend graduate school before going to work for a non-profit. “This research opportunity was a great stepping stone to graduate research and helped me understand and better prepare for what I should expect when I begin researching at a higher level,” Winstead observed. “This experience only instilled in me my passion and certainty that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.”



She took a top-down approach to her research, beginning with an understanding of the history of fast fashion, a term used to describe affordable clothing designs that move quickly from the catwalk to stores to meet new trends. From there, she studied the national clothing chain’s history in America. Next, she looked at where the clothier purchases raw materials to make T-shirts. She found out how third-party vendors hired by the company, specifically in Vietnam, enforce and uphold labor laws. She studied the chain’s relationship with producers and suppliers.

Winstead attempted to contact someone at the company’s corporate office to obtain additional information but received no response. “I dealt with quite a bit of roadblocks,” she said. “Dr. Delehanty, who is also my faculty advisor for my major, was extremely helpful navigating around the roadblocks. He offered advice and suggestions in order for me to proceed.”

Additionally, Winstead explored the impacts of globalization on fast fashion. “While globalization can have positive effects, I wanted to understand how globalized capitalism has more negative effects than positive,” she observed. “Fast fashion seriously imposes on the rights and safety of people, particularly women and children, all around the world. Living in America, a country that is highly engaged in globalized capitalism, it is clear that materialistic items and impulse purchases dominate most people’s purchasing habits. I wanted to know how our living in a materialistic world dominated by quantity over quality affects people—the people we never see, meet, or are aware that exist—who are behind the production of those items.”

However, she didn’t find much research into the industry’s treatment of its workers. Most of the articles discuss the environmental impacts of fast fashion. “It seemed almost unfair that human lives were oftentimes overlooked,” Winstead observed.

[Learn more about the Department of Social Sciences.](#)

Photos by Lindy Lynch / GWU Student Photo Team

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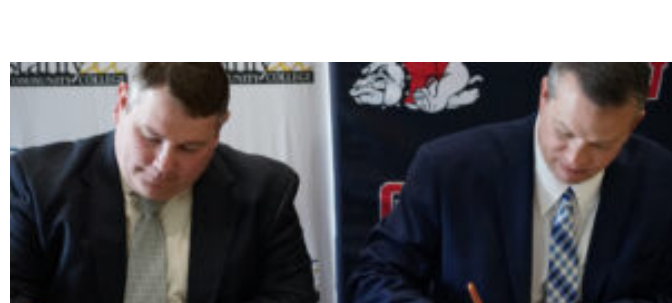


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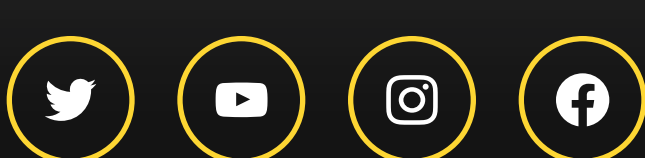
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