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## Making Trade Fair

You have probably heard of fair trade. It shows up on labels for things like cacao and coffee beans, and is widely touted as being really, super, incredibly important.

And the reality is that it's actually as important as it's hyped up to be.

Fair trade doesn't just affect your chocolate or cuppa joe. It's important across all sorts of products: bananas, cotton, gold, sugar, tea, flowers, avocados, wine, ice cream, gum, vodka, jam, granola, toaster pastries, cherries, tapestries, clothing, honey, juices, rice, spices, herbs, and vanilla.

The problem is, many times fair trade products aren't used. It's easier not too. Fair trade means that the original producers of those goods -- your farmers and weavers and winemakers and gold miners -- are paid a fair price. And the first rule of economics is to keep production costs as low as possible, so it's easier for sellers to settle for non-fair trade products.

We technically have two stores in our high school: the school merch shop, which sells things like hoodies and pom-pom hats, and the Kick, which sells things like pre-made hot chocolate to students in the morning for \$1. Unfortunately, I couldn't find any Fair Trade Certified products in either of these stores. That being said, I wasn't in the merch shop for long (it's only open during lunch), and the Kick doesn't have a physical setup so I couldn't waltz through and ask, "Got any free trade?" like a socially aware tumbleweed that people needed to chase away with a broom so they could get back to work. I do, however, know from personal experience that the Kick uses Domino's Sugar packets, which are Fair Trade Certified.

Four additional products that my school's stores could switch to Fair Trade Certified alternatives are tea, coffee, cotton, and fresh produce for lunches. The tea and coffee could be switched relatively easily -- I've been able to find Fair Trade teas and coffees in the supermarket before without having to look *too* hard. The fresh produce would be harder to switch to fair trade, because it's a lot harder to find fair trade fresh produce. Finally, the cotton would be the hardest to switch to fair trade. The clothing that is sold in the school's merch shop is very obviously meant to be for TC Williams. It says "TC Williams", in TC's colors, with a TC logo slapped on for extra emphasis. Switching over to materials that may be fair trade, but aren't as customized, would be a hard sell to pitch to the administration. Additionally, cotton isn't a very environmentally sustainable material, as Project Green Challenge has pointed out on the day where water was discussed.

In case the previous section was too long, skip ahead to here to see if there's a Fair Trade Campaign at TC Williams!

There isn't.

This isn't surprising to me, and I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be surprising to anyone else who goes here. TC has taken many steps towards being more environmentally friendly

(composting, installing water sheds, etc), but it still has a long way to go. And, truth be told, many people here have too many personally pressing events to be able to expend a lot of time carrying out a campaign.

All of that changes now. Maybe.

At this point, it is very important to mention that multiple teams are from my school, which means that multiple teams have seen this challenge, which henceforth and forever on means that actually planning a campaign might result in chaos as about five teams try to set up a campaign. On the other hand, *there are about five teams from my school*. We could start a campaign on our own, although it would be better if we could manage to get the entire school involved. Clubs are relatively easy to set up, and I know a few teachers who would be willing to sponsor one, so we could begin the campaign through that.

I think that a product that could easily be switched to fair trade at our school and that should be switched to fair trade is coffee. The current coffee that we use isn't very good. It's one of the reasons why so many people pick up coffee from Starbucks instead of the Kick. So, without further ado, here is Erica Thompson's 5-step program to making trade fairer at TC. It's actually sort of three steps, but it's like one of those tests where there's three questions but you have to answer a, b, and c for each. But I digress.

First, I'll have to convince the administration that switching to fair trade coffee is worth the effort. The arguments that I currently have for switching to fair trade coffee are 1) it is readily and easily available, 2) prices are close to/the same as non-fair trade coffee, and 3) we can't call ourselves a forward-thinking school if we don't focus on things like fair trade. Additionally, I would have to convince the student population to buy the coffee, because what's the point of switching coffee types if no one cares. I hope that we can do this by purchasing coffee from Starbucks, which is where most students get their coffee from anyways. Finally, I would want to contact the Culinary Arts class to see if they might be able to/want to dedicate some time towards learning how to brew specialty coffees. It would add variety to their curriculum and might allow the Kick to be able to make more money/put itself on the map amongst students. Those last two points would be especially important, because if the Kick did better, the administration would be able to use that increased revenue as incentive to switch other products to fair trade ones.

Coffee is just the first step, though. Hot chocolate and teas are also relatively easy to replace with fair trade versions, and if revenue is great enough from those it might even be possible to convince the administration to switch the fresh produce in the cafeteria to free trade types. Free trade is often overlooked, but it is incredibly important. You probably already know that, if you're reading this, but it deserves to be said regardless. And the best way to switch to free trade is by taking small steps and committing to the idea that people should be paid fairly for their goods.

Thank you for coming to my TED talk.