

# USAS | Organizing for Student and Worker Power

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United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) is opposed to the proposed Korea FTA. We have seen the way free trade agreements of the past have created space for gross violations of workers' rights in participating countries. For example, under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), our allies in the Dominican Republic working inside a Free Trade Zone were subject to inhumane conditions in sweatshops producing apparel goods for consumers in the US, including colleges and universities. These workers are currently affiliated with FEDOTRAZONAS, the union federation of free trade zone workers in the DR. Because of the free trade zone status of their factory location, laws did little to support their efforts to ensure safety and respect on the job. They were subjected to daily harassment and one pregnant worker even lost her child after a factory manager physically assaulted her.

We have learned of yet another factory in which horrifying sweatshop conditions would be supported under the Korea FTA, the Kaesong Industrial Complex. Because the Korea FTA covers materials *assembled* in South Korea, it would force US consumption of materials from Kaesong, located in North Korea, which are regularly shipped to South Korea for assembly. Conditions in Kaesong are infamous, and as the largest student organization devoted to supporting workers' rights, USAS has always supported the rights of workers to work in dignified conditions and have a voice on the job. As evidenced by free trade agreements of the past, and the Kaesong case which is already an issue that we see being perpetuated by such an agreement, USAS holds that an agreement such as the Korea FTA would be detrimental to workers' rights globally.