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| **Social Responsibility**  In her article,[**“Blood on our Backs,”**](http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/1/blood-on-our-backs.html) Karen Coates discusses the plight of Cambodian garment workers that produce clothing sold in the Western world – primarily in the United States by such stores as Old Navy, Target, Walmart and Kohl’s. In so doing, Coats outlines the contrasting perspectives of (1) the ***workers***, mostly young women, who seek a safer work environment and an increase in their meager $80 monthly wage, (2) the ***garment manufacturers***, who prefer to maintain their $5 billion annual exports and their current profit margin,  (3) **retail stores/corporations** such as Walmart that prefer that their costs remain low, and (4) ***western consumers*** who also prefer that prices for clothing at these stores remain low and affordable.  As the article indicates, each of these social categories of actors has different beliefs, values, attitudes, and interests. In other words, they inhabit somewhat different cultures and sub-cultures. As a result, they disagree over whether this objective condition *really* is a problem, what, if anything, should be done about the situation (i.e., whose behavior needs to change), and the likelihood that such efforts would be successful.  **Your essay should be double-spaced, using 12 point font. Please put your full name and your College Wide ID on the first page of your essay in the top right hand corner. You must turn in two, separate hard copies of the assignment to me. Please staple each copy separately. In your essay you will answer these 3 sets of questions:**  (1) What are the different values of the four categories of social actors listed above? How do these differences affect their perspectives in this state of affairs?  (2) Whether you recognize it or not, your actions as a consumer play a part in the current circumstances in Cambodia. In your view, do you have any social responsibility to act – for example, to boycott stores that carry these products – in order to affect change? What other strategies would you suggest? What are the effects of you not doing anything?  (3) Given the competing interests and differences in power that are attached to the different collective social actors, a solution to this problem will not be easily devised. Cheap labor always seems to be available. And according to Ken Loo, secretary-general of the Cambodian Garment Manufacturers Association, in the end, a few boycotting consumers “can’t do anything.” Discuss what you believe to be the responsibility of each of the groups to solve the problems associated with the situation. In your view, are these difficulties insurmountable? Why or why not? |