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# Keep Your Hatred Sharp and Your Nikes Clean! (No Logo reviewed)

By David Panos

No Logo charts the rise of global super-brands (Nike, The Gap, Starbucks et al) and attempts a critical account of contemporary corporate strategy. Whatever else it is good for, this wide ranging, detailed and up to the minute survey will no doubt prove invaluable to savvy youth marketers the world over.

Cynicism aside, Naomi Klein's initially light-weight account of the evils of the culture industry grows into a well documented analysis of 'globalised' employment practices both in the Western high street and the Asian sweatshop. Despite the pop-sociological, Sunday supplement tone, which runs unsettlingly close to the 'cool-hunter' lingo she loves to hate, Klein does manage to puncture the beguiling facade of the 'post-industrial' image-brokers. No Logo starts to read like a 21st century globalised update of Engels's Condition of the Working Class – but wrapped up in media studies candy floss, presumably a strategy to get past publishers and readers potentially unsympathetic to its quietly political agenda. These days, brands are a 'sexy' topic for discussion – international workers organisations aren't.

Klein's central argument is that the disparate strands of anti-corporate activity that sprang up in the late 1990s represent a crucial shift in contemporary activism, leading out of the cul-de-sac of identity politics and towards a new critique founded squarely on political economy. Although her first hand accounts of brand-bashing include the anti-materialist burlesque of Reclaim the Streets, the billboard-defacing situationism of America's self-styled 'Culture Jammers' and the liberal guilt-tripping of the 'No Sweat' campaign in the US, Klein has no illusions about the often limited nature of these single issue campaigns.

Instead she maintains that their common preoccupation with the mechanisms of global trade, combined with the universalising power of the Internet as a conduit for political organisation, could set the scene for a hard-edged yet popular anti-capitalism. This glimmer of hope for the possibility of a living politics is commendable but, unfortunately, Klein fails to interrogate the ideological baggage that so often accompanies knee-jerk anti-brand sentiments. Criticism of multinationals so often simply appeals to a badge-wearing nostalgic humanism popular with old lefties, or worse, the easy, unreconstructed authenticity so popular with the very hipsters who can't decide whether to climb the barricades for fear of scuffing their Nikes.

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*No Logo* by Naomi Klein  
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