

Justice, Do It!

A Play by Maria Sweeney and her students

Scene 1: Recess at Hawes

Characters:

Gina
David
Jessica
Melanie
Victoria
Larry (narrator)

Place: Hawes Playground

(Kids are playing around, tossing balls, talking, etc. Three kids walk onto the playground, one wearing brand new Nikes and the others wearing Disney t-shirts.)

Narrator (Larry): As you can see, it's recess at Hawes School.

David: New sneakers, Jessica?

Jessica: You bet. They cost a bundle, but they're Nikes.

David: I don't wanna be mean or anything, but did you know those sneakers were made in Vietnam by workers who are treated really badly?

Jessica: What are you talking about? Nikes are all American sneakers. They're made right here in the United States.

Gina: Well, in social studies we've been learning about how workers are treated around the world. We found out that Nikes *used* to be made here, but not anymore.

David: Yeah, Phil Knight, the billionaire president of Nike, decided to have Nike sneakers and all kinds of Nike stuff made in poor Third World countries because they could pay the workers next to nothing there and make more money for the company.

Victoria: So, what's wrong with that?

Jessica: Isn't it his job to make as much money as possible?

Gina: Sort of, but, Nike can still make tons of money without exploiting desperate Third World workers.

Melanie: Whoa with all those big words -- exploiting desperate Third World workers--what does that mean?

David: Exploiting means taking advantage of other people to make money. Desperate means being very poor and not having any hope.

Gina: And Third World countries are very poor countries that are much less developed than the United States. They don't have many factories. Lots of people there don't have jobs and most of those who do make less money in a year than Americans make in two weeks. Sooo..., what the Nike corporation does is they go to countries like Indonesia and Vietnam and they hire very poor people and pay them very low wages.

Victoria: Isn't Nike doing a good thing giving those people jobs?

Jessica: Shouldn't they be grateful just to have a job?

David: They are glad to have jobs, but they want to be paid more and to be treated with respect.

Gina: Yeah, they want to earn enough money to feed their families and live decently. Oh and by the way, Melanie, Disney is treating their workers pretty badly in Haiti and other Third World countries.

Melanie: Give me a break, good ole Disney-- Mickey Mouse, Goofy, Pluto and all that sweet stuff. I can't believe that Disney would ex--what's that word?

David: Exploit

Melanie: Yeah, I don't believe Disney would exploit their workers. Next you're going to tell me that Coca Cola is bad to their workers.

Gina: No, Coca Cola is actually decent to their workers and the company still makes tons of money. That's the point. There are plenty of companies that pay their workers well and treat them decently and they still make money.

David: Right, that's why we're trying to get Nike and Disney to do the right thing.

Victoria: How do you plan to do that?

Gina: Well, we're going to tell everyone we know about how Disney and Nike treat their workers, and we're going to get lots of people to boycott Nike and Disney and to write letters to those companies.

Victoria: What does boycott mean?

David: It means to refuse to buy something in order to get a company to do something, like treat their workers right.

Jessica: You mean not buy Nike and Disney stuff?

David and Gina: Exactly!!

Victoria, Melanie and Jessica: That's crazy!!

Gina: Listen, in a few minutes our class is doing a play on all this. Come with an open mind and see what you think.

Narrator (Larry): Our play focuses on two major companies that are making their stuff in Third World countries-- Nike and Disney. There are actually many companies doing this, and more and more all the time. We chose to focus on Nike and Disney because these are very important companies for kids and originally this play was written for the kids at our school. We also chose Nike and Disney because they are very large and extremely profitable companies and there is a lot of research available on their companies' practices in Third World countries. The first half of the play focuses on Disney and the second half focuses on Nike.

Scene 2

Characters:

Victoria (worker at McDonald's)

Jaime (father)

Bridget (child)

Josie (mother)

Alex (Vietnamese immigrant)

Larry (narrator)

Place: McDonald's

(Victoria is standing behind counter at McDonald's. Family comes in to buy dinner.)

Narrator (Larry): We're in a McDonald's somewhere in New Jersey. As you all probably know, McDonald's sells Happy Meals which often have Disney toys inside. Some of these toys are made in Vietnam and the workers making them aren't treated well at all.

* Jaime and Josie play the parts of the parents. Bridget is their child. Victoria is a worker at McDonald's and Alex is a Vietnamese immigrant.

Bridget: Yipee! Yipee! McDonald's! (sings McDonald's song. Victoria sings along with her.). Mom, can I get two Happy Meals so I can get two Disney toys. Please, pretty please with sugar on top. I promise I'll eat the second one for breakfast tomorrow.

Josie: I'm sorry, Sweetheart. I know you just won your big T-ball game and all, but you know how I feel about Happy Meals or any McDonald's food for that matter. There's not an ounce of nutrition in that stuff. One Happy Meal is more than enough.

Bridget: Daddy, please, please! Can't I just get two Happy Meals?

Jaime: You heard your mother, Dear. One Happy Meal is enough. And it had better make you happy.

Bridget: (Making a disappointed face, stomping her foot and crossing her arms.) Oh, all right.

Victoria: (to Josie) May I help you, Miss?

Josie: Yes, we'll have one Happy Meal.

Victoria: Anything else for you and your husband?

Josie: Heavens no. We'll eat something a bit more nutritious at home.

Victoria: Whatever! (to Bridget) Here's your Happy Meal, little girl.

Bridget: Oh I can't wait to see what my toy is.

Alex: (to Bridget) Hi. Excuse me. I'm sorry to bother you, but is that a Happy Meal you're eating?

Bridget: Yeah, of course, but who are you? And where are you from? Mars? Everyone knows what a Happy Meal is.

Alex: Well, my name is _____ and my family recently came here from Vietnam.

Bridget: Oh, where's that?

Alex: Vietnam is in Asia, almost half way around the world. It's a very beautiful country, but very poor.

Bridget: Oh, that's too bad. Is that why you came here?

Alex: Yeah

Bridget: Well, you should get yourself a Happy Meal and start enjoying one of the great American pleasures.

Alex: Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. The little toys in those Happy Meals are made in a factory in my village back home. Many of the young girls from my village work in that factory. Some as young as 15 years old, including my sister, at least until we moved here.

Bridget: You mean these toys aren't made in the United States?

Alex: No, they're not. The Disney Company started making them in Vietnam because the people are so desperate and poor there they will work for very low wages.

Bridget: But if the workers are so young, aren't they just using their money for ice cream and Starbucks and stuff?

Alex: Not at all. Their money helps buy food for their families. The families really need the money. But the girls earn very little and the conditions in the factories are horrible.

Bridget: You're lying. I love Mc Donald's.

Alex: Well, there's no way to prove that I'm telling the truth unless you go to the factory, but look at this (taking out toy and showing child bottom of toy). It says right here "Made in Vietnam."

Bridget: Yeah, but that doesn't prove that the workers are treated badly there.

Alex: I guess it doesn't, but you can talk to my sister and she'll tell you. Her life was terrible when she worked in the Disney factory.

Bridget: Really? How bad was it?

Alex: Awful, she worked such long hours and the bosses mistreated her. Sometimes she was punished for not working fast enough and no matter how hard or how fast she worked she was never paid more than \$ 2 a day.

Bridget: Two dollars! That's about how much it costs for a Happy Meal. I feel sorry for your sister and the other girls who work in that factory.

Alex: Yeah, so do I, and there's another problem, too.

Bridget: What's that?

Alex: It's acetone, one of the chemicals used to make those toys. Acetone is poisonous.

Bridget: (throwing toy) Poison? Yuck!

Alex: Don't worry. The toy won't poison you. But making it can make the workers very sick. Do you know what nail polish remover smells like?

Bridget: Sure. It smells really bad.

Alex: Nail polish remover is acetone. They use it as a paint thinner when painting the toys. Now imagine gallons of this smelly stuff. Imagine breathing acetone fumes hour after hour in a room with hardly any air.

Bridget: pee u

Alex: And one day recently about 15 girls in my sister's factory passed out from the fumes. A few had to be rushed to the hospital.

Bridget: That's horrible.

Alex: And the factory owner didn't even care. They still use that same chemical and they haven't improved the ventilation.

Bridget: I feel just terrible. What can I do?

Alex: You can do what hundreds of children have begun doing: stop buying Disney products and write a letter to Michael Eisner telling him to improve the working conditions and raise the pay of the workers.

Bridget: You bet I will. And I'll get all my friends to join in, too.

Scene 3

Characters:

Jaime (dad)

Daizo (child)

Yukiko (mom)

Narrator (Jaime)

Place: Home of Haitian Family

(Child is seated in a shack with very simple furniture and a few bowls. Parents enter, coming home from work.)

Narrator (Jaime): We're in the home of a typical Haitian family that works in a Disney factory. Most families live in small one room shacks, probably smaller than most of your bedrooms. Most don't have running water. The parents of this family work in a factory making 101 Dalmatians pajamas. They earn only \$ 2.20 a day. They would need to earn at least twice that much to be able to pay for the bare essentials: food, water, rent, bus fare and tuition for their child to go to school.

* Daizo is the child. Yukiko is the mom and I am the father.

Daizo: Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad! I'm so glad you're home. I'm very hungry.

(Parents hug child and say hello.)

Daizo: You got paid today; didn't you? What did you bring for dinner?

Jaime: Daizo, I'm very sorry, but after paying the rent, and the bus fare and giving our boss the money we owed him for the crummy lunches we get at work, we only had a few dollars left. We were only able to buy beans and rice.

Yukiko: (holding up bags of beans and rice) And we have to make this last for two weeks. We can only eat a little bit each day.

Daizo: I'm so tired of being hungry and getting sick all the time. Oh, how I wish we could have chicken and oranges.

Jaime: I know; it's terrible. The last time you were sick with that very high temperature we couldn't even afford to take you to the doctor. Our job doesn't give us any medical insurance.

Yukiko: And I feel so guilty that neither of us can stay home with you when you get sick, but we don't get any sick days.

Jaime: That's right. If we stay home, we loose a day's pay.

Daizo: Our life is so hard. Will things ever get better?

Jaime: Well, I heard from someone at work who has relatives in the United States that a big movement is starting up there to help us.

Yukiko: Yeah, people are starting to boycott Disney and to write letters to Michael Eisner.

Daizo: Who's Michael Eisner?

Jaime: He's the president of Disney. I heard that lots of children and adults have been having protests at the Disney stores and they are asking Michael Eisner to start treating workers like us better.

Yukiko: Yes, and we're also starting a union at work.

Daizo: What's a union?

Jaime: That's a group of workers who join together to fight for their rights. The only problem is that in the past anytime we started to form a union the boss would fire all the leaders.

Daizo: Isn't that illegal?

Yukiko: Yeah, but the boss doesn't care. He gets away with it.

Daizo: Well, I hope that the people in the United States and the union you're starting can help us.

Scene 4

Characters:

Han (boss)

Jaime (Bobby-worker, narrator)

Jon (worker)

Place: Disney Factory

(Workers are standing behind tables sewing Disney clothing.)

Narrator (Jaime): We're in a factory where Disney clothing is made. Everything that you see in this scene is based on information gathered by human rights groups who went to Haiti to investigate working conditions in Disney factories.

*Han plays the boss. Jon plays a worker and I play a worker.

Han: (starts walking in. He looks down at the attendance sheet and then up at the workers.) Where is Josh (shouting)?

Jon: Um, I'll ask Bobby. Bobby, Where is Josh?

Jaime: I heard that he's very sick. He got dehydrated at work yesterday.

Han: Okay, that's one less worker. The rest of you will have to work extra hard today. (he walks off stage.)

Jon: So another worker down. If this keeps up, we'll all be on our backs. It's about 95 degrees in here and there's no circulation.

Jaime: And the boss never lets us stop for a drink. No wonder Josh got dehydrated.

Han: (comes storming back on stage.) You guys better stop the talkin' and get back to work.

Jaime and Jon: Yes, Sir (in a trembling voice)

(Han walks off stage again.)

Jon: You know, I've had enough of this. We're treated like slaves around here. We need to form a strong union.

Jaime: Remember what happened to the last ones who tried to start a union.

Jon: Yeah, I know, they beat up Susan and William and then they fired them. But we've got to do something. We can't go on living like this.

Jaime: You're right. I can't take it anymore. They force us to work faster and faster to make more and more of these pajamas.

Jon: I heard that it costs Disney less than a dollar to make each pair of pajamas. That's cause they pay us hardly anything. And then they sell these things for twenty bucks in the United States.

Jaime: Twenty bucks! (shouting in amazement). It takes me two weeks to earn that much.

Jon: And that's not all. Did you know that in 1993, the president of the Disney Company, Michael Eisner, earned \$220 million dollars? That's something like ninety seven thousand dollars an hour.

Jaime: While we earn only twenty eight cents an hour.

Jon: What a gyp.

Jaime: It sure seems like the Disney company can afford to pay us more money.

(Han storms back on stage.)

Han: (shouting) I just told you guys, no talking on the job. You'll never meet quota wasting time like that. You two don't go home tonight till you're done with your work.

Jon: Another late night.

Scene 5

Characters:

Josie (Michael Eisner)

Bridget (Mickey Mouse)

Melanie (Zachary Hanson)

Kevin (Butler)

Peter (narrator)

Place: Michael Eisner's office

Narrator (Peter): We're in Michael Eisner's office. He is the president of the Disney Company. Zachary Hanson comes in with Mickey Mouse to try to convince Mr. Eisner to treat the workers better at the Disney factories.

*Josie is Michael Eisner. Bridget is Mickey Mouse. Melanie is Zachary Hanson and Kevin is the Butler.

(Michael Eisner is sitting at his desk counting. There is a knock at the door.)

Josie: Franc (snapping), get the door at once.

Kevin: Yes, Mr. Eisner.

(Butler rushes over to the door. MM and Melanie walk in.)

Josie: What do you want, Mickey? And who are you kid?

Bridget: Mr. Eisner, Sir, I'm here to talk to you about something important and rather urgent.

Melanie: As the head of this company, you are responsible for a very serious and bad situation. We are both really concerned. We always thought Disney made people happy, but now we know Disney is also causing a lot of suffering.

Josie: What on earth are you babbling about?

Bridget: Mr. Eisner, do you know who's making the 101 Dalmatians Disney pajamas?

Josie: Of course I do. Do you think I'm stupid? Some people off in Haiti, wherever that is, are making those jazzy PJs and they sure are glad to have a job.
(turns to Butler) And Franc, bring me a glass of water.

Kevin: Yes, Sir.
(Butler pours Mr. Eisner a glass of water and brings it to him.)

Josie: And who's the kid?

Melanie: My name is Zachary Hanson Don't you know me? Anyway, I'm here to tell you that lots of people out there in this country, many of them kids, are very angry about how the workers in your factories are treated.

Bridget: Do you know that the workers are working in steaming hot, dirty factories? The air is filled with dust. They work very long hours and are not paid a living wage.

Josie: What's this about living wage? They're paid the legal minimum wage for their country.

Melanie: But the people in Haiti can't live on the minimum wage. We were down there in Haiti and saw how they live.

Bridget: They live in horrible little shacks and barely have enough food to eat. Their lives are nothing like ours.

Melanie: But they're people just like us and they want decent lives. They want to be able to feed their kids and send them to school.

Bridget: We're so rich compared to them. It's so sad and we feel responsible. And I'm tellin' ya, Mr. Eisner, I'm not wearing these dumb ears (ripping off ears) or any of this costume anymore until things change.

Melanie: And I'm going to go out there and tell children and parents all over America to stop buying Disney products and seeing Disney movies until working conditions improve in all Disney factories.

Bridget: We cannot support a company that exploits its workers. Especially since Disney has been making record profits in recent years.

Melanie: You can well afford to pay those workers a living wage. You pay yourself millions of dollars a year.

Scene 6

Characters:

Kevin

Peter

Han

David (all workers)

Jon (boss)

Yukiko (narrator)

Place: Nike Factory

Narrator (Yukiko): Now our play shifts to focus on Nike.
We're in a Nike factory in Vietnam.

*Kevin, Peter, Han, and David are all workers. Jon is the boss.

Han: The working conditions in this factory are horrible. I can't take it anymore.

David: Neither can I.

Kevin: We only make 20 cents an hour. I'm barely even feeding myself on these low wages. We all have to work long, long hours just to survive. My wife and my teenagers are all working.

Peter: It's so unfair. We're human beings too.

David: Yeah, but we're not treated like humans. I'm dying of thirst already, but I'm sure the boss won't let me get a drink.

Kevin: Me too, but we're only allowed to get two drinks during our eight hour shift.

Peter: And we can only go to the bathroom once. This is torture.

Han: It is, but be glad they're not making us run out in the hot sun today.

Kevin: I know, did you hear about that. At another Nike factory across town the boss made a bunch of workers run around out in the boiling hot sun for one hour just because they didn't wear the regulation shoes to work.

Peter: Unbelievable!!

David: That's not all. I heard that another group of workers was forced to kneel with their hands in the air for an hour because they weren't working fast enough.

Kevin: Speaking of working fast enough, we better move it or we'll never reach our quota.

Han: I could only take 10 minutes for lunch because I have so much work to do today.

David: Same here. I only had time to eat a cup of rice. I'm so hungry.

Peter: By the way, did you know it costs the Nike Company only eight dollars to make a pair of Nike sneakers. And that's because they pay us so little.

Han: Eight dollars? Do you know what these sneakers sell for in the United States?

David: No, how much?

Han: They sell for more than eighty dollars.

David: Wow, so somebody's making a ton of profit from our sweat and blood.

Kevin: That somebody is the head of Nike and the Nike shareholders.

Jon: (comes rushing in with a sneaker in his hands) Look at this sneaker that just came off of your assembly line. It's terrible. You're all talking and not paying attention to your work. Poor quality work is unacceptable. (begins hitting the workers with the sneaker.)

Workers: !!!!!!!

Scene 7

Characters:

Alex (Michael Jordan)

Mark (Tiger Woods)

Jessica (Michael Jordan's daughter, Jasmine)

Gina (Daughter's friend)

Han (narrator)

Place: Michael Jordan's Mansion

Narrator (Han): We're in the home of Michael Jordan. As you may know, Michael Jordan endorses Nike and gets paid \$ 20 million a year for this.

*Michael Jordan is played by Alex, Tiger Woods, the famous golfer, is played by Mark, Jessica plays Michael Jordan's daughter and Gina plays her friend.

(Michael Jordan is shooting hoops when Jasmine and her friend come home.)

Jessica: Guess what, Dad, we were learning about you in school today.

Alex: The gym teacher's talkin' about me again? I love that guy.

Jessica: No, Daddy, not exactly. We were learning about you in social studies and it was pretty embarrassing.

Gina: Yeah, the teacher said you earn twenty million dollars a year endorsing Nike.

Alex: Yeah, so. I'm responsible for makin' Nike the hottest sneaker around.

Jasmine: While the workers who make Nike sneakers get paid hardly anything.

Gina: And their bosses treat them like dirt, hitting them across the head with sneakers, not letting them get drinks or go to the bathroom.

Alex: I don't believe a word of it. And since when is your teacher an expert on Nike stuff. Where are these things (pointing to his sneakers and hat) made anyway?

Jasmine: Most Nike products are made in Indonesia, China and Vietnam. The people are very poor there and Nike takes advantage of them.

Alex: It's not my problem!

(there's a knock on the door. Tiger Woods comes strolling in.)

Alex: Hey Tiger. You come by to help me with my stroke?

Mark: Sure thing, Mike.

Gina: We learned about you, too in school today, Tiger.

Mark: What's the kid talkin' about?

Alex: Oh, pay no attention to them. They're learnin' some lies in school.

Jessica: Dad, my teacher has all sorts of articles and reports and other information about what goes on in Nike factories. People have been going there and doing investigations.

Tiger: Oh, you're talkin' about Nike. I just love that company. Did you know I just signed a contract with them. They're goin' to pay me eight million bucks a year just to wear their clothes. Now I can buy a mansion just as big as yours.

Gina: Well, did you know, Tiger, that people are suffering because of Nike? They treat their workers terribly.

Jessica: That's why our class wrote these letters to you guys (handing them each a few letters) to try to convince you to do the right thing.
Come on, Dad. Just do it.

Alex: (Alex reads a few letters and then tosses them into the hoop.)
I'm not gonna stand for this disrespect, Young Lady. If it weren't for the twenty million bucks Nike pays me each year, you wouldn't have all your fancy clothes, and vacations and servants and all that.

Jessica: I'd be happy with a lot less, Dad. I just want the world to be a better place and for people to be treated right.

Tiger: (Reads a few letters and then hits them off a tee.)
This is a bunch of junk. I can't believe what they're teachin' you kids at school.
(While Tiger says the above, Mike hits a letter off the tee. Tiger sees that and says:)

Tiger: Nice stroke, Mike.

Mike: Thanks, Tiger.

Gina: They're teachin' us to care about justice and not to just care about ourselves and havin' tons of money.

Jessica: They're teachin' us to care about others and to work to make the world more fair, things you guys obviously never learned about.

(Alex and Mark walk off stage together.)

Alex: I'm gonna have to have a talk with that teacher.

Scene 8

Characters:

Larry (Phil Knight)

Peter (shareholder)

Jon (narrator)

Place: Nike Headquarters

Narrator (Jon): We're at Nike Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon. Larry plays Phil Knight who is the president of Nike and Jaime plays a person who owns Nike stock. This is a shareholders meeting.

Larry: Hello, and welcome to the annual Nike shareholders meeting. This has been a great year for Nike.

(Crowd cheers wildly.)

Larry: We've now got the two hottest sports figures in America, hey, in the world, endorsing Nike: Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods.

(Crowd cheers wildly.)

Larry: And we've got a sure fire new advertising campaign going aimed at getting more girls to wear Nike stuff.

(Crowd cheers wildly.)

Larry: Nike continues to make record profits. Yes, we're literally rakin' it in, folks

(Crowd cheers wildly.)

Peter: (shouting) No Nike. Nike stinks.

Larry: Who said that?

Peter: (standing) I did, sir. I have a riddle for you, Mr. Knight.

Larry: What is it?

Peter: What do you call a swoosh that's sweating?

Larry: Is this some kind of a stupid joke?

Peter: No, it's not. I'm very serious. A sweating swoosh is a Nike sweatshop.

Larry: A Nike sweatshop?

Peter: Yeah, I've been doing a bit of research and have discovered that Nike products are being made in the Third World under sweatshop conditions. Workers are crowded into hot and dusty factories, forced to work like crazy and paid badly.

Larry: Yeah, sure. Security, get this loony out of here at once.

Peter: (as he is being dragged away) This will not end here, Mr. Knight. There is a growing movement out there to make Nike into a more responsible company or put you out of business. The choice is yours.

Larry: Huh, I'm certainly not going to lose any sleep over this tonight.

Scene 9

Hawes Playground

characters:

Mark

Han

Victoria

Jon

Han: Wow, that's really depressing. I had no idea that Nike and Disney stuff was made under such bad conditions.

Victoria: Yeah, I feel really bad for those workers. I never even thought about who made the stuff I buy before seeing this play.

Jon: Me either, nobody does. That's why our class wanted to do this play for the school.

Han: Where did you get all of your information? How do we know this is true?

Jon: We did lots of research. We got information off the Internet and from lots of newspapers like the Bergen Record and New York Times. We also saw two TV news shows on this: 48 Hours and Dateline NBC.

Victoria: But what about the other side of the story? What about Nike and the Disney Company's point of view?

Mark: Actually, we wrote to them and the letters we got back were ridiculous. They denied everything. They sent us lots of information supporting their side of the story, but to us it didn't sound like the truth.

Jon: We also heard the company spokespeople talking on a video and you could tell they weren't telling the truth. At least I didn't believe them and most of our class didn't.

Han: But this is still depressing. In your play you showed that it was almost impossible to change the minds of the presidents of Nike and Disney and also Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods.

Mark: Well, we just need more people to join the protests. We certainly haven't lost hope. If lots and lots of people started boycotting these companies and writing letters to them eventually they will probably listen.

Jon: Yeah, and in the meantime, the workers in Indonesia and other Third World countries are fighting for their rights, protesting loudly getting more and more power.

Victoria: If we can just get tons and tons of people to join in this movement, I think we can make a difference.

Han: So what are we waiting for. Let's get started.

Entire Cast: Yeah, let's get started
