Creating Equitable Trade in the Apparel Industry: Reflections on 25 Years

...the story behind the label...
In 1992 it all began with a tortilla chip
Conventional Cotton...the fabric of our lives?

- More pesticides on Cotton than nearly any crop (Coffee/Cotton/Tobacco)

- Grown on 3-5% of land; uses 10% of earth’s pesticides and 24% of earth’s insecticides

- 5 of top 9 pesticides use on cotton are classified by EPA as ‘probably carcinogens’.

- 66% of harvest ends up in cottonseed oil, marbled beef, dairy

- Cotton clothing production is called the world’s “dirtiest” industry because of volume of chemicals used in growing and processing.
From Field to Finished Garment – 6 steps, 8 weeks, countless chemicals

**Harvesting**

**Sewing** – undereducated workers paid by the piece

**Ginning** – lose 2/3 to ‘gin trash’

**Spinning** – non-soluble oils and surfactants

**Dyeing** – heavy metals, phthalates, carcinogens, mutagens, toxic effluent water

**Knitting** – cationic softeners, formaldehyde
Harvesting
Spinning
Knitting
Dyeing
Cutting and Sewing

2017 Maggie's Organics ©
The Teachings of a Tee Shirt – from saving acres to sustaining lives
Finding a New Way Forward
From Socks to Sock Monkeys – creating the sewing co-op back home
Bringing the co-op model to the U.S. OPPORTUNITY THREADS

humble beginnings in Morganton, North Carolina 2007
Walter Vincente’s dream of owning a business
Reyna started working at OT in 2011; became member-owner in 2013.
Opportunity Threads today
Opportunity Threads continues to grow, now sewing for over 20 brands.

They make everything from custom tee-shirt blankets to camping tents

OT currently sews all of Maggie’s best-selling A-line skirts, as well as our line of Beanies and Hairware. Maggie’s just moved 5 new garments to Opportunity Threads including all of our basic tees.

This will enable Opportunity Threads to add an entirely new production line, which will increase their work force.

OT now pays a minimum of $15/ hour to workers.

Owners have earned profits the past 5 quarters, of an averaging $3000.

They have established a rotating loan fund, which has enabled all but one owner to purchase a home.

They are currently setting up their own 501c3 to fund schooling for residents of their home communities of Guatemala.
Now

Peru cottonfield Spring 2015

Then

Our Newest Challenge and what it means

Same field 2017