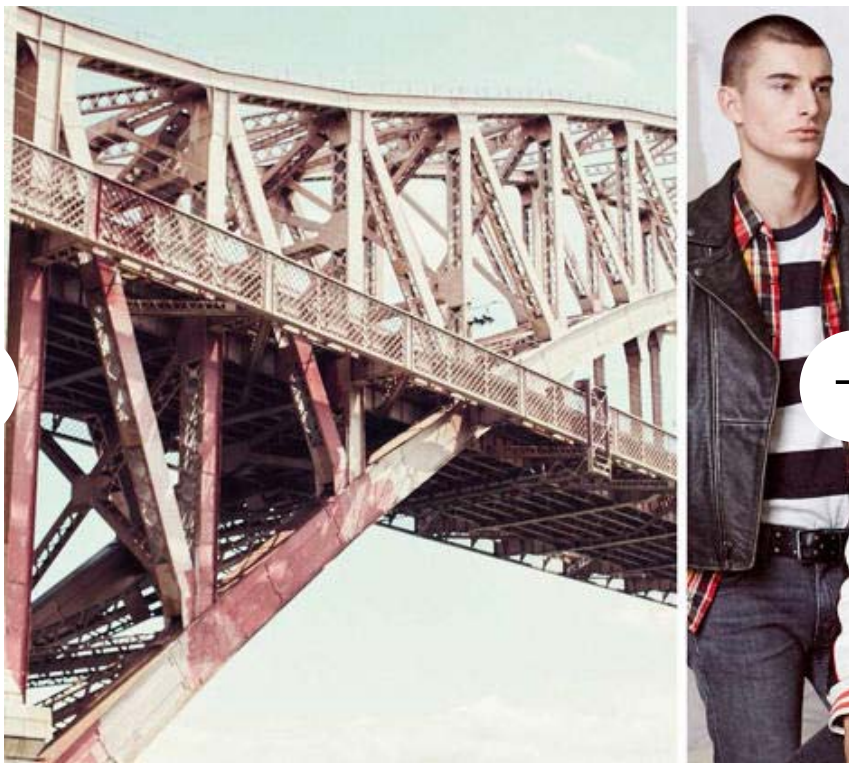


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Levi's Is Radically Redefining Sustainability

And it all comes down to making a timeless product that the customer will hold on to for many, many years.



01/12 In focusing on sustainability, Levi's wants to cultivate a "consumer with real attachment to an object."

ELIZABETH SEGRAN | 02.09.17 | 5:00 AM

How do we make the fashion industry more sustainable? For Paul Dillinger, head of global

carbon dioxide or use less toxic dyes. To make a real impact in the world, you need to help change the way people think about clothes.



Paul Dillinger

Levi's has always been a leader in sustainability. In 1991, it established "terms of engagement" that laid out the brand's global code of conduct throughout its supply chain. This meant setting standards for worker's rights,

a healthy work environment, and an ethical engagement with the planet. "It wasn't an easy thing to do," Dillinger says. "At the time, we were worried that doing this would drive up our own costs and prices." In fact, what happened was that these practices were quickly adopted by other companies, who used it as a template to write their own rules. "We were actually leading industry toward new standards," he says.

These days, Levi's continues to focus on how it can push the envelope when it comes to being green. Dillinger believes that part of the solution is encouraging people to stop thinking about clothes as disposable. As a designer, his goal is to create durable jeans that customers love and feel good wearing because this increases the likelihood that they will care for them better and keep them longer. In this Creative Conversation, we discuss what it will take to create a real paradigm shift in people's thinking about fashion.

Are you intentionally changing the narrative about consumption?

Yes. In my wildest dreams, we'd be helping to cultivate a Levi's consumer who values durability and demonstrates a real attachment to an object. We'd be nurturing the person who doesn't purchase because of immediate seasonal change, but who purchases for lasting value. This would mean there are shared values between our brand and our consumer.



A publicity shot for a Levi's collection that Dillinger designed specifically for urban bicycle commuters.

This seems to run counter to the fashion industry, which values new looks and trends.

Yes, most companies are focused on convincing the consumer that they are not pretty unless they radically change their look; they're not going to be *in*, attractive, or cool. They create a

boyfriend jeans on you real hard this season, they're probably going to be pushing a super skinny jegging on you next season. This radical oscillation in silhouette preference is going to make you feel that the thing you just bought is no longer valuable.

Instead, what we're trying to do is encourage our consumer to be conscious that when they purchase a pair of jeans, that is not an isolated event. The garment had an impact before they purchased it, in terms of people that made it and the waste that was involved in creating it. And it's going to exist long after they're done owning it.

What would happen if we could change culture in such a way that consumers imagined the end of life of the product they bought? So, what if we said that you could mulch your jeans, put them in your garden, and see how the decomposition of your Levi's could feed the food that you were growing. That's conceivably how we might dispose of garments in the future. That would prompt the consumer to think about little details like how the color was applied to the garment in the first place. Would the chemicals in the dye affect the garment, my food, and my body? This is the kind of holistic thinking we want to spur in our customers. Fundamentally, asking them to take into account the impact they're responsible for in the whole system, from the supply chain to the eventual disposal of the garment.

VIDEO: HOW LEVI STRAUSS & CO. KEEPS IMPROVING JEANS



How do you cultivate that consumer?

It starts with the product. Take the 501: It is an anchor product that has endured over time. Sure, it has evolved in some ways, but we don't offer radical changes in silhouette. We're owning the history and the provenance of our brand that makes essential, archetypal pieces of clothing.

"What would happen if we could change culture in such a way that consumers imagined the end of life of the product they bought?"

What we do is we try to maintain a fit portfolio where we ensure that we have the fit you feel best in, not the one you've been told to feel best in. Then we make that product available consistently. When you love a pair of jeans, you develop an emotional connection not just with that object, but with the brand. You know that the brand has served you well. If we can make clothes that are really worth loving, then hopefully people will love

We're choosing not to participate in the fashion cycle. Instead, we're choosing to cultivate long-term relationships with the consumer and deliver against their needs. And hopefully that participates in the recalibration of consumption broadly, though that is a lofty goal.

You're known for your forward thinking when it comes to incorporating technology into fabrics. How do you do this, but also ensure that you are making these classic garments?

Technology is a loaded word: It implies gadget. We're engaged in scientific dialogue with a lot of different people, but not all of it lights up the way you'd expect when you think of tech. There are ideas that we're bringing to market that you might never notice. One that comes to mind is coming out in the next six months. A lot of people expect performance from clothing now. It's one of the reasons that yoga pants are winning the market. The solution for performance has often been a mechanical or chemical application to a garment, often in the form of a synthetic fiber blended in. Often these technologies really flatten and dull the vibe of a jean. It starts to look like franken-jean: a jean from an unhappy future.

How do you bring that performance to a garment that is, in many ways, very similar to its original

**"We're
choosing
not to**

We've been working on this for two and a half years. The proposition is to bring jeans to market that will be 100% cotton, but that have hollow yarn architectures. We had a polyester that was woven into the yarn, but after weaving the [yarn] together [to make the denim], we were able to dissolve it out. What happens in that process is that we have the ability to wick away moisture and hold in warm air, but the jeans look and feel the way an authentic pair of Levi's should.

fashion cycle. Instead, we're choosing to cultivate long-term relationships with the consumer and deliver against their needs."



But I imagine that it is hard to create profound change as one isolated company.

chef, or one farmer, or one supermarket choosing to align itself around different values. It's a whole evolving system of consciousness. Personally, I can only take responsibility for my own behavior and advocate for these values.

But I also think there are other likeminded people that we can seek out. We have a program called the Levi Strauss Collaboratory where we bring small designers who share our values and help them integrate sustainability into their young new businesses. We give them the support they need to bring that to life. So we can help nurture the ecosystem.

As a large company, what are you doing to make your manufacturing process more sustainable?

I think it's important to focus on making products sustainable in every place that we manufacture. It's very important not to use offshoring as a way to hide the way that we are manufacturing. We believe in transparency. It's incumbent on us to know that water is a precious resource everywhere in the world. And it's important for everyone across the entire supply chain—from the farmers to the factory workers to the people disposing of the products—to be conscious of resource conservation. To do this, we have a life cycle assessment that looks at the impact at every stage of the process, all around the world.

clothes. You don't have to wash your jeans every time you wear them; in fact, this is bad for them. If you hang them to dry, they'll last longer. A simple message like that allows us to involve the consumer in a much bigger effort to carefully, deliberately draw down on resource consumption.

And importantly, when we unlock proprietary data about water or waste, the best thing we can do with that is share it with everybody. Last year, we hosted a conference here at Levi Strauss where we brought in our competitors and anyone in the industry who was interested, to share every bit of knowledge we had about water-saving best practices. If you figure out how to save water and you don't tell people about it, you're kind of a jerk.

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[DAVID ZAX](#) | 02.11.17 | 5:05 AM

The president's executive order barring citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries has caused a lot of chaos over the last two weeks. And while the order has been officially halted by a court order, the president has threatened to take the case to the Supreme Court, making the future of the order still uncertain.

There has been a lot of coverage of those affected by the ban, including many professionals working in the U.S. One vulnerable group affected by the ban that hasn't gotten as much attention are victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is essentially a form of modern slavery, in which people are coerced or lured into unpaid or underpaid labor (including, but not limited to, sex work). The U.N.'s Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking estimates that there are 2.5 million victims of human trafficking worldwide, with the bulk of those in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. (Some other estimates put that number at many millions more.) But fully 270,000—over 10%—of such victims are estimated to be in industrialized countries like the U.S. In the subcategory of sex trafficking alone, it is estimated that some 50,000 women and girls are brought into the U.S. each year.

A U.S.-born citizen can be trafficked, but more often, a trafficking victim in the U.S. is a foreign-

position of indentured servitude. It's these foreign-born victims of human trafficking in the U.S. who stand to be adversely affected by Trump's executive orders.

Shani Adess is the senior supervising attorney at the Immigration Law Project of Safe Horizon, which provides legal services to victims of human trafficking. Adess offers an example of how Trump's travel ban could affect someone who has survived trafficking.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and subsequent laws were designed to combat human trafficking, as well as to extend a helping hand to victims of human trafficking in the U.S. Under these laws, if you can prove that you're a victim of human trafficking, you can be entitled to a number of benefits, including a visa to stay in the U.S., not only for yourself, but also potentially for your spouse and children. So if you're a foreign-born trafficking victim who has escaped your situation, you can work to prosecute your traffickers in U.S. courts, thereby preventing them from victimizing other people.

But under Trump's executive order, trafficking victims from the seven banned countries would have to choose between being separated from their families and fighting their cases. Says Adess: "I would have to sit here as a victim of trafficking and choose: Am I going to be separated from my kids or not? Maybe I'm cooperating with the FBI, maybe I have a civil case open to get money for the work I did when I

psychological care she is entitled to under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. "But all of that would require me to be here in the U.S.," continues Adess. "Now I have to choose whether I'm going to have that, or my children"—that is, by returning to her home country, where she was first lured or coerced into her trafficking situation to begin with.

Another way victims of trafficking could be harmed by Trump's policies, say advocates, relates to the fact that such victims have often been coerced into doing illegal acts (like prostitution). Trump's order "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States" casts a wide net on people to prioritize for deportation. While the Obama administration had favored focusing on undocumented immigrants who posed a threat to "national security, border security, and public safety," Trump's recent order explicitly singles out "aliens who have been convicted of any criminal offense," but also those who "have been charged with any criminal offense, where such charge has not been resolved."

Easily imagined scenarios like these, says Adess, underscore "how incredibly poorly thought out and crafted these executive orders are."

Ultimately, though, the greatest effects of his orders and rhetoric may be cultural, rather than, strictly speaking, legal. Kay Buck, the CEO of the anti-trafficking organization CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking), says that

in the process of claiming benefits or testifying in prosecutions of their traffickers.



Because Trump's order also singles out "aliens" who "have abused any program related to receipt of public benefits," some of CAST's client base are wondering whether claiming any benefits they are entitled to might somehow make them a target. Likewise, there is some fear that collaborating in a prosecution could increase their visibility.

Buck and the lawyers she works with have so far been able to persuade victims of human trafficking to continue to seek the benefits they're entitled to and prosecute their traffickers.

But the sense of panic is hard to shake. And Buck only has information about those who have *already escaped* their trafficking situation. What about those currently in a trafficking situation

of the most effective tools that traffickers use to maintain control over someone and make them fearful of seeking help—besides violence—is the threat of the legal system, of law enforcement, or the threat of deportation back to a country where they may have valid fears of returning to," says Adess.

Even if the block on the travel ban remains in place, the executive order has created a climate where people in trafficking situations feel even more powerless. "It's horrible," says Buck of what she sees written in the faces of her clients. "I'm seeing a level of fear that we've never seen before."

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