Introduction
This module on citizens and consumers making change in the global fashion industry is a valuable resource for faculty and lecturers interested in enhancing their syllabi that focuses on the following themes: workers rights, international business, and consumer activism. This module is useful for those at the Haas Business School, the Goldman School for Public Policy, the Labor Center, and in the Departments of Sociology, Political Science, and Gender and Women’s Studies.

Learning objective
Develop a point of view about the role of consumers in promoting ethical/sustainable businesses and products

Speaker video
(18-minute video clip)

Speaker Bio: Ayesha Barenblat, Founder and CEO of Remake
Ayesha is a social entrepreneur with a passion for building sustainable supply chains that respect people and our planet. With over 15 years of leadership to promote social justice and sustainability within the fashion industry, she founded Remake to mobilize citizens to demand a more just, transparent, and accountable fashion industry. Remake’s free educational resources, advocacy campaigns, and sustainable brands directory are focused on making fashion a force for good.

Ayesha has worked across the public, private, and civil society sectors to promote the rights and dignity of the women who make our clothes. Prior to founding Remake, she led brand engagement at Better Work, a World Bank and United Nations partnership, to ensure safe and decent working conditions in garment factories around the world. Prior to this, she ran the fashion vertical at BSR, providing strategic advice to brands including Levi Strauss and Company, Marks and Spencer, Nike, and the Gucci Group on the design and integration of sustainability into business. She has a master’s degree in public policy from the University of California, Berkeley.

Reading
• Saxena, Mullins and Tripathi (2021). The Weakest Link in the Supply Chain - How the Pandemic is Affecting Bangladesh’s Garment Workers
  https://www.ihrb.org/focus-areas/covid-19/bangladesh-garment-workers
Possible assignments

- **(Approximate time- 10 minutes)** Discussion forum prompts:
  o Should consumers be a key driving force in pushing for change in a particular industry? Why or why not?
  o Reflection on Ayesha Barenblat’s video

- **(For smaller classes, approximate time- 30 minutes)** In class debate between two groups:
  o Break the class up in to two groups
    - Group 1: Consumers can be a key driving force in pushing for change
    - Group 2: The onus to push for change should not be on the consumer. Focusing on the consumer absolves corporate retailers of any responsibility
  o Encourage all members of the group to speak
  o Ask each group to meet for 10 minutes and discuss arguments for their point of view and counter arguments for the opposing point of view
  o Moderate the debate giving each side a chance to give opening arguments and each side a chance to respond to the points made by the other side

- **(Take home assignment)** Research a consumer campaign that addressed a business and human rights issue. What were the goals of the campaign? What did they achieve? What could they have done better? Would you consider this campaign to be successful?

Key teaching points

- **Can the problem that you're trying to solve with your shopping cart be better tackled by a regulation, a social program, or some sort of different incentive? The answer is almost always yes.**
- Think of ourselves more as citizens and less as consumers. As citizens, we have almost lost our way because we think that every solution has to have a market based solution
- How can citizens drive social change?
  1) #PayUpNow campaign: citizens holding signs on Instagram to demand that global brands pay what they owed to workers around the world
     - Grassroots campaign
     - Used the mainstream press to amplify the message
     - Used social media effectively, as a tool (social media is not activism in and of itself)
     - Fashion models to college students were a part of this campaign
     o The campaign ended up unlocking 20 billion of the initial 40 billion in canceled contracts from 21 different brands.
  2) Binding agreements, like the Bangladesh Accord
3) California Senate Bill 62
   ▪ Frame the issue in terms of wage theft
   ▪ Build a business coalition
   ▪ 1500 postcards from citizens were sent to the Governor in support of this bill