

CALIFORNIA Apparel IN News

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 71 YEARS

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Jaime Elyse at Art Hearts Fashion



Dena Burton at LA Fashion Week



Mario de la Torre at Style Fashion Week



Mena Lombard at Fashion Week LA



Style Fashion Week at the Pacific Design Center

LOS ANGELES FASHION WEEK LA SCENE

With a lineup that included 70 designers showing at four venues—plus a handful of independent events—Los Angeles Fashion Week showcased the broad range of fashion from local talent to international labels. See pages 8 and 9 for highlights from the shows. Extended coverage appears at ApparelNews.net.

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Crowds Mixed at LA Men's Market

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Wind was kicking up outside, but the emphasis was on summer for the **LA Men's Market**, which took place March 29–30 on the 10th-floor events space at the **California Market Center** in downtown Los Angeles.

It was the sixth edition of the LA Men's Market, which focuses on "minor" seasons such as Summer and Holiday. Those seasons often do not receive the same attention as the larger Spring and Fall seasons, but they can help build a label's bottom line, said Kellen Rolland, the founder of the show. He also runs **The NTRWK Agency** showroom at the CMC.

The size of the show—100 brands—was about even with the LAMM show in October. But some prominent brands signed up to debut at the recent show, including veteran streetwear brands **Stüssy** and **Undeafated** as well as

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INDUSTRY FOCUS: FINANCE

What Consequences Would Raising Tariffs Have on the Apparel Industry?

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

In the whirlwind of election-year debates, some politicians have been taking a protectionist attitude and threatening to raise U.S. tariffs and erect trade barriers.

This is contrary to previous administrations that have started down a long path of negotiating free-trade agreements to make U.S.-made goods and financial services cheaper to overseas buyers and to benefit U.S. consumers who pay less for products manufactured in foreign countries.

The talk of higher tariffs comes at a time when the 12-member Trans-Pacific Partnership has wrapped up negotiations as the nation's largest free-trade agreement. It now must be approved by Congress.

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Hong Kong to Share in \$20.5M Retrieved From Clothing Smuggled Through LA Ports

An elaborate scheme that involved bringing in Chinese-made apparel from Hong Kong through Los Angeles ports, allegedly destined for Mexico but ending up in the United States, will result in Hong Kong sharing some of the \$20.5 million worth of forfeited assets collected during the investigation.

In 2000, U.S. customs officials launched an investigation into a multinational criminal organization responsible for smuggling hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Chinese-made apparel into the U.S. through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

The probe by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, which worked with Hong Kong customs officials, revealed that more than

7,000 shipping containers filled with clothing worth more than \$600 million were being illegally imported into the United States.

To avoid paying duties and being subject to quotas, the smugglers—working in China, Hong Kong and the United States—provided fake documents to customs brokers saying the Chinese-made garments were being sold to companies in Mexico when they were really being delivered to buyers throughout the United States, resulting in U.S. customs losing \$60 million in customs revenues.

When being rerouted to Mexico, the containers were transferred to an in-bond warehouse where they were supposed to be held until transferred by truck to Mexico. But the investigation showed that the containers were making their way to U.S. manufactur-

ers and retailers.

"This payout has been a long time coming, but it's a testament to the perseverance of the personnel on two continents who were involved in dismantling this scheme," said Joseph Macias, special agent in charge for HSI Los Angeles. "Commercial smuggling is a multi-billion-dollar industry that robs governments of vital revenues and undermines our economy."

Besides apprehending more than 200 shipping containers filled with clothing, the investigation resulted in the seizure of a 100,000-square-foot warehouse in Commerce, Calif., near Los Angeles, as well as other business and residential locations in Los Angeles and Laredo, Texas.

In addition, U.S. government investiga-

tors seized or obtained restraining orders against two dozen bank accounts in the U.S. and Hong Kong.

Five people, including the owner of a Los Angeles-area trucking company, have been federally charged in connection with the case.

Armando Salcedo, 53, owner of **Friends Global Logistics** trucking company, pleaded guilty in 2008 to making false customs declarations and smuggling. In addition to receiving an 18-month prison term, Salcedo forfeited nearly \$5 million in personal property and other assets to the federal government, including his Downey residence and the Commerce warehouse.

The remaining four defendants remain at large and are considered fugitives.

—Deborah Belgium

Planet Blue Opening NY Store in SoHo

Planet Blue will take its sun-kissed, California lifestyle to Manhattan's urbane SoHo neighborhood.

It will open its 12th store, at 191 Lafayette St., on the corner of Broome Street, on May 1, said David Lindell, vice president of retail at Planet Blue.

"New York City has always been our No. 2 e-commerce market," he said. "It is high time that we bring the excitement of bricks-and-mortar to SoHo." The company also ran a popular New York-area pop-up shop in the Hamptons, on Long Island, in summer 2015.

The veteran Santa Monica retailer also believes that no other specialty retailer in New York can offer its depth and breadth of brands. Planet Blue's brand mix includes

Night Cap, For Love and Lemons, Jen's Pirate Booty, Wildfox and the house brand, **Blue Life**.

The store's strongest season will be summer, Lindell said. But he also expects big business in winter, when New Yorkers buy beach lifestyle clothes and wear them for vacations to the Caribbean.

The SoHo store was designed by Planet Blue Founder Ling-Su Chinn. The two-level, 2,400-square-foot store will feature exposed brick and a painted blue tie-dye mural as well as a lounge area.

Planet Blue will continue opening physical stores. This summer it is scheduled to open a beach-side shop in the Lido Marina Village district in Newport Beach, Calif.

—Andrew Asch

Ex-CEO at Liz Claiborne Named to American Apparel Board

Nearly two months after emerging from bankruptcy, **American Apparel** has named three apparel-industry veterans to its seven-member board of directors.

Paul Charron, former chairman and chief executive of **Liz Claiborne Inc.** until 2006, was named chairman of the board, according to sources close to American Apparel.

He joined Liz Claiborne as the chief operating officer in 1994 and became president and chief executive in 1996.

During his tenure, Charron led Liz Claiborne on an acquisition spree, acquiring such brands as **Lucky Brand Jeans, C&C California, Juicy Couture, Laundry by Shelli Segal** and **Prana**.

Following his retirement, he served for five years as senior adviser at **Warburg Pincus**, a New York-based private-equity firm.

Also named to the American Apparel board was Bruce Fetter, a longtime executive at **St. John** in Irvine, Calif. While there, he held various positions such as co-chief executive officer, co-president and chief operating officer.

Susan Davidson, a former Liz Claiborne executive who currently runs **Scoop NYC** fashion boutique and **Zac Posen**, is the third new board member.

Paula Schneider, American Apparel's chief executive since January 2015, remains on the board.—D.B.

Tirnauer Joins Wet Seal as CFO

Judd P. Tirnauer was appointed to the positions of chief financial officer and executive vice president of **The Wet Seal LLC**, the Irvine, Calif., women's retailer that is staging a comeback.

Tirnauer will report to Melanie B. Cox, Wet Seal's chief executive officer. His job becomes effective May 1. He replaces Thomas R. Hillenbrandt, the current Wet Seal CFO. Hillenbrandt will be pursuing new endeavors, Cox said.

Tirnauer most recently served as chief financial officer for **Destination Maternity**. He led the finance team. He also oversaw various operational areas including real estate, procurement and marketing partnerships.

Wet Seal emerged from bankruptcy in fall 2015. Since then, Cox has been hiring a new staff and giving the brand a look that she said was a return to its original DNA. It's a California-casual look—one that is not rooted in surf.—A.A.

Fred Gaylord to Republic Business Credit

Republic Business Credit announced it has hired Fred Gaylord as senior vice president of sales and marketing.

Based in Los Angeles, Gaylord will be Republic Business Credit's first West Coast representative. He will focus on helping CPAs, advisers, bankers and lawyers who work with small- and medium-sized companies to find financial solutions for their clients.

Prior to joining Republic Business Credit,

Gaylord worked for **Chase Manhattan Bank** and **Meinhard Commercial** (a CIT company). He ran the West Coast operations of **Citizens & Southern Bank** and also worked for **Nations Bank** (which became **Bank of America**), **Capital Bancorp**, **Continental Business Credit** and **GMAC Commercial**.

Most recently, he was senior vice president, sales and marketing, at **Bibby Financial Services**.—D.B.

CFA Scholarship Lunch Set for April 21

The **California Fashion Association** will present its annual scholarship awards on April 21 to students from **Academy of Art University-San Francisco, Art Institute of California, California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, California State University-Los Angeles, California State University-Northridge, El Camino College, Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, Los Angeles Trade Tech College, Long Beach City College, Mt.**

San Antonio College, Otis College of Art & Design, Pasadena City College, Santa Monica College and **Washington State University**.

There are still tickets available for the luncheon, which will be held at 11 a.m. in suite C855 at the **California Market Center** in Los Angeles. Non-sponsor tickets are \$50, and all proceeds benefit fashion design students.

For information or tickets call (213) 688-6288 or email events@calfashion.org.

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Stony Apparel's Maiman and Litman Help Raise More than \$800,000 for City of Hope

Stony Apparel founders Steve Maiman and Tony Litman received the **City of Hope** Spirit of Life award on March 12 at an event that raised more than \$800,000 for the research and medical center.

Held at the **SLS Hotel** in Los Angeles, the event drew a who's who of apparel manufacturers, retailers and executives who networked from the cocktail hour through dinner before hitting the dance floor when **Beatles** tribute band **The Fab Four!** took the stage. The group performed two sets: one in matching skinny suits performing early hits and a second in psychedelic garb performing later songs. Honoree Maiman also brought along a guitar to perform "Here Comes the Sun" for the crowd.

The City of Hope has its roots in the fashion industry, said Michael Earnhart, senior vice president at **Wells Fargo Capital Finance** and president of the Fashion & Retail Group at City of Hope.

"I am happy to be here to be part of such an amazing cause," he said. "City of Hope is more than a research facility. City of Hope treats the whole person and their family."

Earnhart described Maiman and Litman as inspirational and then praised the attendees for their fund-raising for City of Hope.

"Your efforts have raised more than \$800,000," he said. "But our work is not

done. What happens one year from now or five years from now? Is our next Spirit of Life honoree here among us?"

Before presenting the awards, Ben Teller, a three-time cancer survivor and former City of Hope patient, shared his own story, which included his first cancer diagnosis in his freshman year of college. Now 26 and cancer-free, Teller encouraged the crowd to text additional donations to City of Hope to meet an on-site fund-raising goal of \$20,000.

Attorney Jeffrey Kapor, chair of **Buchalter Nemer's** consumer products, apparel and textiles practice group, introduced the evening's honorees.

"It seems like yesterday when I met Steve and

Tony when they started their business," Kapor said, recalling that Maiman and Litman explained that the company name, Stony Apparel, represented a combination of their first names and not, Kapor joked, the name of a medical marijuana business.

Maiman thanked the guests, as well as his wife, son and mother, who were in attendance. Litman also thanked his wife and children as well as the guests for "making this night a terrific success." Litman also thanked Stony employees, saying, "Without you guys, Steve and I are not here." He concluded by thanking Maiman, saying, "It's still fun after 20 years."—*Alison A. Nieder*



Tony Litman and Steve Maiman

Calendar

April 2

Debut 2016, presented by FIDM
 Barker Hangar
 Santa Monica Calif.

Stylemax
 Merchandise Mart
 Chicago
 Through April 5

Fashion Week El Paseo
 Various venues
 Palm Desert, Calif.
 Through April 9

April 3

Fashion Market Northern California
 San Mateo County Event Center
 San Mateo, Calif.
 Through April 5

April 4

LA Majors Market
 California Market Center
 Los Angeles
 Through April 6

Las Vegas International Lingerie Show
 Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino

Las Vegas
 Through April 6

April 7

Atlanta Apparel
 AmericasMart
 Atlanta
 Through April 11

April 11

International Textile Expo/The Source
 Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino
 Las Vegas
 Through April 12

CALA
 Denver Mart
 Denver
 Through April 12

April 12

Première Vision
 Metropolitan Pavilion
 New York
 Through April 13

April 13

Kingpins
 Amsterdam
 Through April 14

April 15

"Green Is the New Black: Sustainability in Fashion," a symposium presented by the Fashion Law Project at Loyola Law School
 Loyola Law School
 Los Angeles

April 21

CFF's Scholarship Awards Luncheon
 California Market Center
 Los Angeles

There's more
 on ApparelNews.net.

For calendar details and contact information, visit ApparelNews.net/calendar.

Submissions to the calendar should be faxed to the Calendar Editor at (213) 623-5707. Please include the event's name, date, time, location, admission price and contact information. The deadline for calendar submissions is the Tuesday prior to Friday publication. Inclusion in the calendar is subject to available space and the judgment of the editorial staff.

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Yeba: From Contemporary to Contemporary Activewear

Fashion veterans Cedric and Yves Benaroch, the creators of **2B Free** clothing, made a mark with Hollywood's celebrity sensations in early 2001.

The brothers were inducted into the industry early on, thanks to uncles Charles Elkaim, who worked at **BCBG**, and Albert Elkaim, who works at **Buffalo Jeans**.

The heavily graphic lounge-wear of 2B was a precursor to the debut of their new line, **Yeba**, which stands for "You're Everything Beautiful Always," and exclusively launched on their website in March. Yeba's women's activewear collection has the creative punch and avant-garde designs that 2B was known for but with a fresh twist. "We love color, always have. Even in the past, we wanted the girl who wore our clothing to feel confident and sexy. Same applies with Yeba," Cedric Benaroch said.

The duo set out to produce a current and trend-setting athleticwear line constructed with ultra-soft, luxe fabrications and styles that offered versatility and functionality that could transition from day to night.

"We definitely feel activewear/athleisure is in the same family and is a natural transition from loungewear. We feel there is a huge gap in the activewear world when it comes to being fashion forward yet comfortable at the same time. Our goal is to give women the confidence to

look and feel great from workout to hangout. You work out to look great; why not look great while working out," Yves Benaroch said.

The brothers cull inspiration mainly from nature—sunrises, birds and other wildlife. "You'll see a touch of this in many of our designs," Yves Benaroch said. The collection consists of leggings, crop to full length, as well as T-shirt tanks and sports bras featuring solids and brushed patterns that include ombré color variations, graphic lines, sheer cut-outs and a retro splatter of color, which adds a stylistic element. As a nod to nature, some of the bottoms feature tie dyes, flocks of birds and animal prints. "We would describe Yeba as an edgy yet feminine, vibrant, flattering activewear line," Cedric Benaroch said.

The lightweight fabrics, ranging from nylon and spandex to polyester, offer breathability and wick moisture properties as well. Certain fabrics and washes combined, as well as special softeners, are used for added support and comfort. All fabrics and pieces are sourced locally in Los Angeles with retail price points ranging from \$45 for a sports bra to \$138 for long pants.

For sales information, contact info@yebaclothing.com.—Sarah Wolfson



Aella: From LA E-tail to a Bloomie's Pop-up

Eunice Cho always thought that chic office clothes were uncomfortable and too high maintenance. She wanted bottoms from her Los Angeles women's fashion line, **Aella**, to look like slacks but feel like yogawear.

The high concept paid off for the downtown Los Angeles label. It has been able to sell pants for \$150 to \$250 as a pureplay—or Internet-only—vertical retailer since 2014.

But after keeping a relatively low profile on the digital world—and a short-lived pop-up shop last December in Los Angeles—Aella will take a bow in one of American retail's biggest forums.



The Aella pop-up at Bloomingdale's Manhattan store

One March 30, it will open an Aella pop-up shop at the **Bloomingdale's** flagship in New York at 1000 Third Ave. in Manhattan. The pop-up will last until May 1.

"It's the big leagues," Cho said of Bloomingdale's. "Previously, we only had to supply our own website demand. Now we must service a store that fills up an entire New York City block."

Aella will maintain a 220-square-foot space on the third floor of the iconic retailer, which made splashes with branding details such as its "Little Brown Bags" and the store's checkerboard floors. Featured at the Bloomingdale's pop-up will be the brand's best-selling high-waist flare and ankle skinny pants. But they'll be available in new colors



California Fashion Foundation

From the heart of the California Fashion Association



California Fashion Foundation & Textile Association of Los Angeles Present 2016 Scholarship Awards Luncheon

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Otis College of Art & Design; Pasadena City College; Santa Monica College; Washington State University

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Karen Kane, KWDZ Manufacturing, Moss Adams, STC-QST, Stony Apparel, Swatfame,
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Aella *Continued from previous page*



for Spring including khaki, gray, navy and light blue. The bottoms are made out of fabrics such as “Matte Skin,” made in Italy, which resembles a performance fabric. There’s also “Powder Skin,” a stretch twill that more resembles officewear. It is made in Turkey.

Aella customers also will view tees made out of a “Featherskin” fabric, which is proprietary to Aella. Also available are the brand’s convertible duster jackets and its short-sleeve blazers. Cho will often be at the pop-up to provide styling tips for her brand. It is a big step up for Aella. It’s always been a small, tightly controlled, LA-based manufacturer that makes runs of clothes that are in the hundreds, not thousands, of items.

Cho plans to chart steady growth for her brand. “We would love to have bricks-and-mortar flagships in the next few years, but where we will specifically be, I can’t say. We’ll follow where our customers are.”—*Andrew Asch*

LA Men’s Market *Continued from page 1*

footwear brands **Timberland** and **Palladium**.

Calvin Klein Underwear, represented by **The GIG Showroom**, as well as **Calvin Klein Sportswear** and **Calvin Klein Jeans**, also took a bow at LAMM. Also making a debut were notebook brand **Moleskine** and **Impossible Project**, a whimsical company that produces film for **Polaroid** cameras in a world dominated by digital cameras.

Retailers dropping by the show included **Active Ride Shop**, headquartered in Southern California; **American Rag Cie**; **Revolve**; **FWRD**; and **Zebra Club**, based in Seattle. Other boutiques dropping by the show were **Feature LV**, headquartered in Las Vegas, and **Steadbrook**, headquartered in Denver.

Like any other trade show, some vendors were pleased with business and others were not. For Gil Gomez of the **Black Circle Agency**, the show was built on appointments. “We saw all of our accounts,” he said. “The show was good to close certain accounts who had taken their time in making decisions. We made business with a couple of new retailers too.” Gomez represented brands such as **Annex**, **27 Miles Malibu**, **Old Fame**, **Zak Brand** and **Jacob Holston**.

Said Joel Gossman of **The Gig Showroom**, “It was the demographic I was looking for, but traffic was less than expected.”

On the second day of the show, Keith Costello, a representative for the **Publish** brand, said traffic was strong on the first day of the show. “Today was slower,” he said. “That is the nature of these shows.”

Nico Reyes, sales manager for New York-headquartered streetwear line **Staple**, is a veteran of the **Agenda** trade shows in Las Vegas. He hoped more new retailers would have visited the recent run of LAMM, but one of the main reasons for his brand’s appearance at the show was to gain greater visibility on the West Coast.

Jackie Nguyen, a buyer for **Zebra Club**, is a veteran shopper at LAMM. “It keeps on progressing. It would be ideal if it would coincide with the [women’s-focused] **LA Fashion Market**.”

She forecast an upswing for business in 2016. “Last year was rough. But



LAMM MEETING: Gil Gomez, left, of Black Circle Agency looks over a garment with a buyer at LA Men’s Market.



DISPLAY: Keith Costello holds up a piece from the Publish brand at LA Men’s Market.

spring break was nice, and there has been an upturn,” she said.

For style at LA Men’s Market, Kim Johnson, a consultant and private contractor, said that brands are being conservative with silhouettes but taking chances with other things sartorial. “People are feeling more liberal with colors because they

are reverting to proven performers with silhouettes,” he said. “The fashion retail logic runs something like this.” Consumers may think that they own a black hoodie, a gray hoodie, but they don’t have a hoodie in a dusty rose color, so it would be something unique for a consumer’s wardrobe.

Johnson saw brands experimenting with silhouettes with exaggerated sizes. He also saw a re-engagement with denim. “You have brands that don’t touch denim now trying denim. You have denim brands trying new fits. One new fit is a carrot shape, roomy on top and tight on the ankle.●



Kellen Rolland, founder of LA Men’s Market

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Autumn in LA

Los Angeles Fashion Week events wrapped on March 20 following a jam-packed schedule that included 70 runway shows during the event's eight-day run. **Style Fashion Week** concluded the line-up with shows at the **Pacific Design Center** in West Hollywood, Calif. Other Fashion Week events included **Fashion Week L.A.** at **Union Station** in downtown Los Angeles, **L.A. Fashion Week at Columbia Square** in Hollywood and **Art Hearts Fashion Week** at the **Taglyan Complex** in Hollywood (coverage appeared in the last two issues). There were also independent events hosted by William Bradley (covered in last week's issue) and Maggie Barry.

Extended coverage of Los Angeles Fashion Week can be found at ApparelNews.net.

Style Fashion Week



KEN ALCAZAR

Mario de la Torre

Maggie Barry



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAGGIE BARRY



KEN ALCAZAR

Armature



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I Am Zoe



KEN ALCAZAR

The 8th Continent

Fashion Week LA



JUNG S. KIM (COURTESY OF FWLA)

Evae Evae



JUNG S. KIM (COURTESY OF FWLA)

Lou Lou



HAYLEY FISK (COURTESY OF FWLA)

Adil



JUNG S. KIM (COURTESY OF FWLA)

Minan Wong



JUNG S. KIM (COURTESY OF FWLA)

Mena Lombard



JUNG S. KIM (COURTESY OF FWLA)

Naven



JUNG S. KIM (COURTESY OF FWLA)

The Valdecio Collection

LA Fashion Week



FELIX SALZMAN

Dena Burton



MANNY LLANURA

George Styler



CHAD ALAN

Esther Perbandt



MANNY LLANURA

Marcelo Quadros



MANNY LLANURA

Michael Sta. Maria



MANNY LLANURA

Phlemuns



FELIX SALZMAN

Underlash

INDUSTRY FOCUS: FINANCE

Finance *Continued from page 1*

If tariffs are raised, how will this affect the apparel industry, and will it drive more companies to produce their clothes domestically?

California Apparel News recently spoke with finance-industry executives and factors about how this would affect their clients.

Mark Bienstock, Managing Director, Express Trade Capital Inc.

Increasing tariffs on imported items has always been an election-year issue that is intended to raise the spectrum of "Made in America."

However, it is still not practical from all perspectives to shift the level of production in the apparel industry from overseas to the U.S.A. The fact of life is that it is much cheaper to produce in such countries as China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, etc.

As prices are ultimately dictated by the retailers, importers and manufacturers will continue to try and squeeze cost savings where possible. However, the cost of doing business in the United States will still greatly exceed the cost of importing, even if there is a slight tariff increase.

Sydnee Breuer, Executive Vice President, Rosenthal & Rosenthal

Depending on the amount of the increase in the tariffs, any prudent business owner will need to do an analysis of alternative sources of supply, be they domestic or overseas, to be able to maintain cost controls. Once the analysis is complete, they can decide the best course of action.

Retailers are hesitant to increase prices to the consumer, unless the product is branded and selling well. For basics and private label, the retailers are basically dictating the price, so prices won't rise unless someone is willing to sell it to them at the current price. It will be the manufacturer/importer that will need to produce more efficiently so they can absorb the increased cost.

Rob Greenspan, President and Chief Executive, Greenspan Consult Inc.

Raising tariffs on imported apparel is an interesting question. Based on my knowledge of tariffs, the effect is to raise the cost of imported goods so that similar domestically made products can be price competitive. Anytime there is a price increase, for whatever reason, it seems the price increase is usually pushed to the ultimate consumer.

would have to be raised significantly to make the U.S. prices competitive to those offshore. Is that going to happen? I think the likelihood of tariffs going significantly higher, driving more people to manufacture in the U.S., is probably low, especially in the moderate to budget price-point categories. That said, some companies might consider doing more "quick-turn" production domestically if the tariffs are large enough to have an impact on pricing and gross profit margins.



Mark Bienstock,
Managing Director,
Express Trade Capital Inc.



Sydnee Breuer,
Executive Vice President,
Rosenthal & Rosenthal



Rob Greenspan,
President and Chief Executive,
Greenspan Consult Inc.



Sunnie Kim,
President and Chief Executive
Officer, Hana Financial

In the short term, I would think we would see consumer prices increase for imported apparel as the cost would try to be passed through.

But as we all know the apparel industry, overall, is very price sensitive. Anything that increases prices will also have effects on the retail market and to consumers who could slow down their spending and cause retail pushback.

The bigger question is whether this could push more companies to manufacture in the United States. The tariffs

Sunnie Kim, President and Chief Executive Officer, Hana Financial

This is definitely an important issue that will have a major impact, not only on the apparel industry but the U.S. economy as a whole.

The immediate impact would be that prices would increase in order to offset the cost of the tariffs as manufacturers would have to pass those fees along to their customers.



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Therefore, consumers would find other alternatives. The fact remains that U.S. companies with foreign manufacturing sites that are subject to tariffs when they bring goods into the U.S. would be unable to compete with foreign manufacturers providing similar goods due to free-trade agreements. This would continue to hurt the apparel industry as well as the U.S. economy as a whole.

It is also uncertain whether the desired effect of bringing jobs back to America would be achieved. Many companies could decide that the imposed tariffs might be less than the

environment that supports domestic production.

John La Lota, Division President, Factoring and Trade Finance, Sterling National Bank

Sterling has been providing the apparel industry with factoring and banking services since 1929, so over the years we've seen our clients navigate through many economic cycles.

Back in the 1980s, the apparel industry was one of the first to move production offshore, which created cost sav-

create jobs, they will ultimately increase the price of imported goods.

As with any other increase in the cost of goods, such as when fuel prices soar or significant currency fluctuations take place, it is usually passed along to consumers.

The industry has proven to be resourceful, finding ways to innovatively deal with the challenges that have come their way. The proposed tariffs would have to be weighed against the initial investment and ongoing expense of bringing manufacturing back to the U.S.



John La Lota,
Division President, Factoring
and Trade Finance,
Sterling National Bank



Lou Mastrianni,
Managing Director and Head of
Apparel Commercial Banking,
Chase



Dave Reza,
Senior Vice President,
Milberg Factors



Lou Sulpizio,
Senior Vice President,
Capital Business Credit

Lou Mastrianni, Managing Director and Head of Apparel Commercial Banking, Chase

I suspect this would have a modest impact on the U.S. apparel industry initially, given that these jobs left long ago due to competition from overseas, low-cost producers. Long term we could see some effects on domestic sourcing and prices depending on the countries impacted and the amount of tariffs.

We may see some production return because of the way retailers are buying goods and managing their own inventory much closer to the season.

For example, if they order less inventory and then need to reorder and want it faster to meet higher demand than anticipated, buyers may look to domestic sources that can turn production and deliver the goods more quickly even though it may come at a higher price.

Dave Reza, Senior Vice President, Milberg Factors

If the next administration in Washington introduces higher tariffs, it would probably lead to increases in consumer prices.

What is uncertain is whether or not domestic production could quickly be ramped up to meet new demand. U.S. textile and apparel production capacity and infrastructure have been seriously impacted by the move to offshore manufacturing.

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cost of labor to produce domestically and therefore continue to manufacture outside of the U.S.

We might also find domestic companies moving to foreign countries that have free-trade agreements with the United States in order to circumvent the tariff issue, which would provide even fewer jobs in our industry, as we have already seen in other industries.

Therefore, other alternatives require consideration, such as tax incentives, reduced regulations and an economic en-

ings that could be passed along to consumers.

There were some challenges, however. We helped many of our clients open letters of credit to secure purchases from factories that were new and had little experience. Communication was difficult, and they didn't have the luxury of today's technology. A little over 10 years ago, the government used quotas on certain categories of goods. While the proposed tariffs are being positioned as a way to balance trade, to allow domestic producers to better compete and to



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Also, a generation of skilled and experienced textile/apparel workers has exited the industry. Hence, even with the benefit of a protectionist environment, a quick move back to domestic production is hard to predict.

Lou Sulpizio, Senior Vice President, Capital Business Credit

An increase in tariffs on imports will undoubtedly have an impact on the apparel industry, and consumers will see a price increase.

Margins will be affected, and there is a strong potential for increases in consumer pricing. Consumer confidence is a driving force behind our global economy, and there is a strong possibility that the retail markets can be negatively impacted.

Companies will need to be sharp on their purchasing by negotiating with suppliers for better pricing to offset increased tariffs. Profits are made on the buys and not necessarily on the sales.

Increased tariffs could also force businesses to seek alternative sourcing as well. I doubt if these increases are going to shift a majority to produce domestically, unfortunately. The costs in Asia continue to be low compared to stateside.

Ken Wengrod, President and Cofounder, FTC Commercial Corp.

If the United States initiates the increase of tariffs on certain imported goods, it would start a petty trade war, and, even worse, other countries could retaliate and potentially go tit for tat.

For the last 30 years, the U.S. has been part of free-trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada, the

Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement and a free-trade agreement with Israel.

No free-trade agreement is perfect, but each agreement has ultimately benefited U.S. interests. Unions have been claiming that millions of jobs have been lost because of NAFTA. I would only agree with the unions that the industries with one workforce such as the automotive sectors in the Detroit area were largely affected by NAFTA. But a good percentage of the job loss actually went to Asia for production and includes other industries as well.

International commerce will continue to grow with or without the United States' involvement. If we want to maintain our leadership in the global economy and make sure our environmental, labor and intellectual-property standards are up to the world's standards, we need to lead the way on international trade deals and level the playing field. We must leave the rhetoric behind and find ways to expand and compete in the global open market, especially when the U.S. is changing from a manufacturer to an IP and service giant. Raising tariffs will not achieve any of this.

Because the U.S. consumer is so important and exports are so vital to countries in Asia, even if the U.S. raises tariffs, foreign exporters can find other ways to reduce the impact of the raised tariffs by engaging in near-shoring and transshipments.

Their foreign countries can also use currency manipulations to ultimately devalue their currency, including monetary easements and negative interest rates that would make their exports less expensive to the end buyers. ●



Ken Wengrod,
President and Cofounder,
FTC Commercial Corp.

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Survey Reveals Clothing Manufacturers Optimistic for Better Spring/Summer Sales

Apparel and accessories manufacturers are optimistic that retailers will be having a good season in the upcoming months.

In a **Capital Business Credit** survey of 30 retail importers and manufacturers that supply approximately \$800 million in goods to retail outlets in the United States, the vast majority said that 2016 will either be better or the same as 2015. Some 45 percent said the Spring/Summer seasons will be stronger than last year, and 39 percent thought it will remain the same.

"Nearly 90 percent of importers and suppliers are reporting reorders for the Spring/Summer shipping season," said Andrew Tananbaum, CBC's executive chairman. "Retailers have become increasingly reticent to stock shelves if they do not believe products will sell or consumers will buy. These reorders mean that the major retail chains and individual stores are optimistic."

In the survey, 78 percent said that orders have increased or stayed the same. Of those who said orders had increased, one-third said they had risen while 29 percent said they had increased by more than 10 percent.

"Consumer confidence is increasing as a result of a more stabilized stock market," said Louis Sulpizio, CBC's senior vice president in Los Angeles. "In addition, with gas prices remaining low and household in-

comes increasing, consumers have a little bit more money in their pockets to spend.

"Additionally, retailers are developing multi-channel [bricks-and-mortar and web] strategies to ensure that consumers can buy what they want, when they want it. Finally, retailers continue to lure consumers in with discounts. While this may reduce margins, it generates needed foot traffic."

Because the Chinese yuan has been devalued recently, half of the survey's respondents said they are considering stepping up their Chinese production. One-third thought margins may increase due to the lower cost to produce goods in China while more than half believes cheaper goods will not translate into lower consumer prices.

Despite the optimism, there are words of caution. "We continue to counsel our importer and wholesaler clients to keep a keen eye on inventory to ensure that they aren't under-sold for the Fall season," Sulpizio said. "We are seeing a new normal occur with respect to soft-goods orders. Retailers are delaying issuing purchase orders and are relying on their wholesale clients to begin producing goods without purchase orders. Ultimately, retailers are looking to create shorter seasons and are requiring quicker turnaround and delivery from wholesalers."

—Deborah Belgum

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