

swarthmore living wage & democracy campaign

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living wage
& democracy

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FACTSHEET: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?

WHO:

- The SLW&DC is a coalition of mostly Swarthmore students working in solidarity with staff and faculty to improve staff wages, transparency of staff-related decisions, and inclusion at the College.

WHAT:

- We believe that staff members **who take care of our needs everyday**—who make our food and clean our bathrooms, for instance—deserve a wage that will allow them to support themselves and their families, **without government assistance or having to work additional jobs**.
- We also believe that all members of the community should have a **real voice in the process** that decides their wages and other important decisions.

WHEN:

- The SLW&DC was created **over four years ago** out of a group of students who had previously been working on issues of international sweatshops. A staff member approached the group and suggested that students focus on the injustices happening on their own campus. Students then **surveyed** employees, finding that their primary concerns were **insufficient wages** and **poor respect**.

WHERE:

- **Swarthmore College**. Swarthmore was founded in 1864 by a group of **Quakers** (including Lucretia Mott, a famous abolitionist and suffragist!) as one of the first **co-educational** colleges in the country. Swarthmore **ranks among the top liberal arts colleges** (consistently within the top 3 of US News & World Report's rankings), and is also **one of the wealthiest colleges** in the nation (consistently within the top ten of endowments, per student, of any college or university).
- **Numerous cities and counties** have passed living wage ordinances, and campaigns exist across the country. In addition, several **campus campaigns** are taking place, including at Stanford, and Harvard, all of which have had serious living wage victories! (for a list of campaigns visit www.acorn.org)

WHY:

- As a school that has prided itself upon and publicized its **commitment to social justice**, Swarthmore has a **moral imperative** to pay a living wage to its staff and to make the decision-making processes involving staff more transparent and democratic. To do otherwise **would be contrary to the Quaker foundations** upon which the College rests. Paying staff a living wage and including staff in decisions relating to them is simply a matter of **respect, commitment, and justice**.

HOW:

- **What** we're asking the school to do is radically reevaluate the way they treat and compensate staff. This would mean deciding that **staff are a high enough priority** that they have to come up with the money. Historically, when the administration decides something is important - be it large-scale events, specific financial aid packages or a new building - **they find the money to make it happen**. And they find it outside of the school's general operating budget.