

## FREE FILM EDUCATION EVENT!

**BRUNTON THEATRE, MUSSELBURGH, TUESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 10am-12.30pm**

When the balance of global power shifts, changing the world as we know it, it can be hard to fully reconstruct the historical realities. Today, the emergence of powerful industrial economies in countries that can become superpowers is barely understood.

**China Blue** is not a political film. It is a documentary chronicling one woman's struggle in a society very alien to our own.

To give you a taste of the film, one scene involves 16-year-old Jasmine and a goldfish. She has worked a 20-hour shift, her pay is late, she won't be able to use the three days off a year she gets to visit her family because she can't afford the train fare. If she falls asleep on the job, she can get fined two days' wages. The girls joke about staying awake and sometimes use clothes pegs to hold their eyes open. They feel lucky to have the job. Left alone at New Year, Jasmine gazes at the goldfish, the only thing in her world onto which she can project her pent up feelings of love and frustration, and says: "You are so lucky, you can sleep any time." Even sleep, the most basic of pleasures we take for granted, is mostly denied her.

Now before viewers get up in arms and want to boycott Chinese goods, check out the reality. It has been widely documented that in countries where they put the squeeze on factories to follow human rights, buyers simply go elsewhere, the original factories close, and kids like Jasmine, some as young as 13, turn to begging and prostitution. The same happens if Western companies like Nike put effective pressure on developing world factories to satisfy customers that their goods have been made to 'ethical standards.'



So what happens - and what we see in the film - is a hypocritical game-play in which buyers and sellers are complicit. Workers are rehearsed on what to say when inspectors come, security guards make duplicate clock cards to show workers did normal shifts with proper breaks, and everyone goes away 'happy'. Watching the charade, we feel a mounting sense of frustration. Jasmine also knows there is nothing that can be done. Her best 'hope' is that the person wearing the denim jeans she has worked all night to make really appreciates what has gone into them, and her feeling is not of bitterness, but of love, just hoping someone, somewhere, cares - that's all. She earns the equivalent of six cents an hour. That's before deductions for food and board. Jasmine is, by Chinese worker standards, quite lucky. An Amnesty International representative explained that at any one time there are several million Chinese undergoing 're-education through labour' which is a punishment handed out fairly lightly and means the government has a workforce at zero labour cost if push comes to shove.

From a global point of view, China is simply going through what the West did years ago. Our Industrial Revolution only involved one third of the world's population: the rest are now catching up, and things will never be the same. Trying to halt China's growth (through protectionist measures) would not only be a disaster for the Chinese workers, it would close off a powerful source of future global prosperity. Next time you put your made-in-China denims on, pause to remember the backbreaking toil that went into them.

**There will be a post-screening discussion led by a representative from Oxfam focusing on World Trade and Mike Pretious, QMU School of Business, Enterprise & Management who will focus on Ethics and Fashion Marketing**

**Online teaching resources are available also**

**For further info contact the Arts Education Officer on [rbaxter@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:rbaxter@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

