

# Tipsheet

## Covering Allegations: Renowned American Brand Accused of Using Forced Prison Labor in China for Work Glove Production

Zhen Wang

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### Summary of the session:

Former FIJ Diversity Fellow Zhen Wang offers a behind-the-scenes look at how she investigated allegations that Milwaukee Tool, a 100-year-old Wisconsin-based company, was using forced Chinese prison labor to make work gloves for the iconic brand. This series has left an impact, made possible through a combination of resources and tools, that Wang will discuss.

### Research Threads

- Working Conditions: What are the working conditions in the prison?
- Production: How many inmates voluntarily or involuntarily work on the production line?
- Mapping out the global supply chain of Milwaukee Tool:
  - a) How to verify contractual relations with the alleged Wisconsin-based tool company?
  - b) How to track the brand-bearing work gloves shipped into the U.S.?
  - c) Do the U.S. companies regulate their overseas suppliers? If so, how?
- Consequences: What would U.S. companies face for sourcing forced labor within their supply chains?

### Forced Labor in Global Supply Chains 101

- Search Google Scholar to find experts on topics and studies to gain deeper insights into the issue.
- [Private Regulation of Labor Standards in Global Supply Chains \(2022\)](#): a comprehensive analysis of self-regulation in addressing labor rights issues in the global supply chain.

The data on labor violations from audits in 12 industries and 12 countries is compelling and easy to digest.

- [Confronting root causes: forced labor in global supply chains \(2018\)](#): The study delves into the underlying factors driving forced labor, including poverty and inadequate labor protection.
- [Governance gaps in eradicating forced labor: From global to domestic supply chains \(2018\)](#): The study shows the use of forced labor can also be a domestic issue, with immigrants being more likely to be exposed to forced labor.
- [How the Prison-Labor Complex changes in China's prison system \(2016\)](#): The study contextualizes changes in the prison-labor complex operations in China. It also identifies human rights organization's concerns about the use of forced labor, exploitation, and abuse within the prison system.

## Reporting Tips

- [Building trust with sources](#), particularly those revealing sensitive information through multiple interviews and ongoing conversations.
- [Dart Center Guide for Trauma-Informed Journalism](#) is good for better communicating with vulnerable sources and being mindful of preventing them from further harm.
- [IRE](#) offers help with various things, including obtaining shipment data and making FOIA requests.
- [Maxar Technologies](#) helps with satellite imagery that provides additional clarity in reporting.

## Key Coverage (links to examples of important stories that provide context, ways to cover various forms of forced labor, etc.)

- Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S.: In 2023, a New York Times [revealed](#) that migrant children were working in some of the U.S.'s most dangerous jobs.
- Hugo Boss and Other Big Brands Vowed To Steer Clear Of Forced Labor In China — But These Shipping Records Raise Questions: In 2022, a BuzzFeed News investigation shed light on renowned clothing brands using forced labor within their production processes, [prompting](#) critical questions about corporate responsibility and ethical sourcing practices.
- Supply Chains: The Dirty Secret of China's Prisons: In 2018, the Financial Times [did](#) a thorough on-the-ground reporting, highlighting examples of Chinese forced prison labor, and the resulting goods being circulated in global markets.

- Seafood from Slaves: In 2015, the Associated Press [found](#) that immigrants in Indonesia, most of them from Myanmar, were being held captive on ships, and forced to process fish. About 2,000 enslaved workers were freed because of the investigation, which won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

### **Supporting Documents**

- Filings filed with financial regulators, such as Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) or the Annual General Meeting of Shareholders reports, to understand the companies' financial operations and business prospects.
- Shipment records to verify if products have arrived at U.S. ports and identify importers.