

# Striving for slavery-free footwear

## I see you - the men poisoned so we can have shoes made of tanned leather



Ramu was a tannery day labourer who died from the poisonous gas while clearing out the tannery sludge tank. There was only one survivor from the 6 tank cleaners.



Daniel: 'He tied me to the tree ... And he started hitting [me], from 7 or 8 until 5 o'clock. Without food, without water.'



Naga Bai can stitch a maximum of 10 pairs of shoe uppers a day, earning just 10 pence for each

### YOUR STORY: *Daniel Moraes Ferreira*

Daniel and his friend Rodrigues, former slaves on a Brazilian cattle farm producing leather for western markets, were originally tempted by a "gato" offering 'a thousand promises'. A week after arrival they discovered the truth. Hundreds of miles from civilisation, they slept on the ground in self made shacks, drank from the same muddy puddles as the cows and had to hunt their own food. Told to cut down the trees, they received no protective equipment, were not paid and when Daniel tried to leave, he was handcuffed around a tree and

beaten continuously for 10 hours without being given any food or water, only stopping at sunset when he told the "gato" (person in charge of slaves) that he would not leave.

Other workers are held in debt bondage by the "gato" who charges them for any supplies including soap, food

and petrol for the chainsaws. He records all they use and subtracts it from their pay so they always owe more than they are owed.

Workers in the slaughter houses of the region, Mato Grosso, have to keep working until they reach the day's quota, sometimes working for 19 hours straight. Ex-

hausted and lacking training, they suffer mutilations from the sharp knives, repetitive strain injuries and have no rights when fired for being sick.



### Some more facts...

- There were 22 billion shoes produced worldwide in 2013, equivalent to 3 pairs of shoes per person worldwide, however in the UK we each purchase an average of 5 pairs of shoes per year.
  - The average shoe is made up of dozens of materials, including polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
- which is highly damaging to both human health and the environment.
- Leather uppers are tanned via a 20-step process that involves heavy chemicals that, in many poor countries, is discharged untreated into drinking water.
  - According to one calculation, a Thai worker would have to toil for 26 million

days to earn as much as Tiger Woods does from his five-year contract with Nike.



# I PLEDGE TO CHANGE MY SHOPPING BECAUSE YOUR STORY MATTERS

## Brands to buy!

- 1) Po-zu
- 2) Blackspot
- 3) Ethletic
- 4) Beyond skin

## Brands to avoid.

- 1) Adidas
- 2) Reebok
- 3) Fila
- 4) Umbro

## Other ways to ensure my shoes are slavery free

The Good Shopping Guide and Ethical consumer both rank different footwear brands, provide links to the websites for these individual brands and provide reports giving extra information about the shoe production process and ethical shoe manufacture.

Be wary of publicity campaigns: companies are invested in maintaining a positive image. Companies could publically condemn slave labour and pledge to make changes, but in reality, they often go on using slaves. On the flipside, bad press can push companies to make significant improvements to working conditions, setting their slaves, in effect, free.

Since the passing of the Modern Slavery Act, all companies with a turn over of £36million or more have to prepare a statement each year to explain the steps they are taking to eradicate slavery in their supply chains. These must be available on their website. So go to the website of your previous shoe manufacturer, as well as any you are now considering buying, to find out what they are doing to discover and combat slavery in their supply chains. If they don't have any information or you've decided to no longer buy their shoes, contact them so they know that you care about the people making your shoes.

## If you want to find out more

Take a look at Labour behind the Label's campaign, Change your Shoes, at:

<http://labourbehindthelabel.org/campaigns/shoes/>

And watch videos containing interviews with former slaves in the shoe production related industries by independent media and research centre DanWatch on their YouTube channel.