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Garment Workers Win Suit Against Company Whose Subcontractors Didn't Pay

Posted by Roy Edroso at 8:35 AM, February 12, 2009



[Liberty Apparel](#) subcontracted its garment-building labor, done pretty much exclusively by Chinese-Americans at very low wages, to small companies of the fly-by-night sort; when the subcontractors folded, as unfortunately happens often in that business, Liberty could claim that the wages lost by employees were not their responsibility. When this happened in 1999, 26 workers lost thousands of dollars owed to them by the subcontractor, and some of them pursued the matter in a suit that has been [bouncing around](#) the courts for years. But yesterday in U.S. District Court the workers in *Zheng v. Liberty Apparel* won liquidated damages of about \$700,000 from Liberty under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the New York State Labor Law Section 345a. It's believed to be the first such victory to acknowledge the liability of a garment manufacturer using these methods, and may open the door to similar suits against companies whose subcontractors don't pay their workers. *Photo (cc) [marissaorton](#).*