

Kicking Away the Ladder: How Donated Clothing Stalls African Industrialization

Research Brief for YouTube Video Script

This research dossier documents the economic, political, and historical case that the global trade in donated/used clothing — particularly its concentration in African markets — actively undermines the conditions developing nations need to industrialize. Each section is organized around the prompts you supplied, with specific statistics, named sources, and direct quotations you can cite.

1. Economic History: Textiles as the First Rung of the Industrial Ladder

The historical pattern

Textile manufacturing — specifically apparel — has been the empirical "first rung" of industrialization for nearly every country that has ever industrialized. The economist **Garth Frazer (Rotman School, University of Toronto)** demonstrated this econometrically in his landmark paper "*Used-Clothing Donations and Apparel Production in Africa*" (*Economic Journal*, vol. 118, no. 532, October 2008, pp. 1764-1784). Frazer showed (with 95% confidence) that virtually every country that has reached an income level above roughly \$11,000 per capita passed through a stage in which at least 1% of its workforce was employed in apparel production. (Ncsu) The relationship is an inverted-U: poor countries grow into garment manufacturing, then exit it as wages rise. (Ncsu) African countries, Frazer argues, have largely failed to "step onto the bottom rung of the manufacturing sophistication ladder." (Oxford Academic)

Concrete cases:

- **Britain.** The original textile-led industrial revolution (late 18th-early 19th c.) was protected by punitive tariffs on finished imports, raw-material import duty rebates, export subsidies, and quality regulations on textile exports — policies sustained until 1846. Britain only embraced free trade after achieving industrial supremacy. (Foreign Policy In Focus)
- **United States.** From Hamilton's *Report on Manufactures* (1791) through the late 19th century, the US was, in Ha-Joon Chang's phrase, "the most ardent practitioner — and the intellectual home — of protectionism," (Amazon) with average manufacturing tariffs of 40-55% protecting Northern textile mills.
- **Japan.** Following the Meiji Restoration (1868), the state established "model factories" in shipbuilding, mining, military goods and *textiles* (the Tomioka silk filature being the

famous example); when "unequal treaties" capped tariffs at 5% until 1911, Japan used subsidies and state ownership instead. (Foreign Policy In Focus)

- **South Korea.** Under Park Chung-hee's first Five-Year Plan (1962–66), light industry — primarily textiles — was the launching pad. (Grokikipedia) Textiles accounted for 25% of exports in 1961 and 41% of all exports by 1965 (Peterson Institute for International Economics, Noland 2003). (Peterson Institute) Firms like Cheil Wool Textile (the seed of Samsung) (Peterson Institute) and Daewoo grew up under state-directed credit and export subsidies before South Korea moved into heavy industry in the 1970s.
- **Bangladesh.** Garment exports grew from \$0.069 million in 1978 to roughly \$47 billion in 2023, (Economics Observatory) now ~80% of all Bangladeshi exports and around 4 million jobs (mostly women). (Economics Observatory) Two policy interventions — Multi-Fibre Arrangement quota allocations after 1985, (I-proclaim) and an EU "Generalized System of Preferences" granting tariff-free access — made this possible. The catalytic deal was the 1979 Daewoo–Desh Garments joint venture, in which 130 Bangladeshis received a year of free training in Korea; 115 of them left within a year to start their own factories. (Wikipedia) (Sources: *Banglapedia*; Mostafa & Klepper; Rhee 1990, "The Catalyst Model of Development.")

Ha-Joon Chang's "Kicking Away the Ladder" thesis

Cambridge economist **Ha-Joon Chang's** 2002 book *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Anthem Press) — borrowing the phrase from 19th-century German economist **Friedrich List** — argues that virtually every "now-developed country" (Chang's "NDCs") industrialized through high tariffs, infant-industry protection, state-directed credit, intellectual-property piracy, and capital controls. Today the same nations, working through the WTO, IMF, World Bank and bilateral trade deals, prohibit poor countries from using these tools. The metaphor: having climbed up, the rich countries pull the ladder up after themselves. (Amazon)

Chang's policy list for early-stage industrializers includes:

- High tariffs on finished manufactures
- Duty drawbacks on imported inputs used for export production (Econdse)
- Export subsidies and state-owned "model factories"
- Ban on the export of skilled labor and machinery (Econdse)
- Lax patent enforcement, allowing copying of foreign technology

Chang's more popular treatment is *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (2007). The free version of his original 2003 *Foreign Policy in Focus* essay

— "Kicking Away the Ladder: The 'Real' History of Free Trade" — is widely available online and is an excellent direct citation source.

A useful critical perspective: **Douglas Irwin (Dartmouth)** and **Stephen Broadberry (Oxford)** have argued that high tariffs were correlated with, not causal of, US/UK growth, and that other factors (resource abundance, labor scarcity, the productivity of agriculture and services) confound Chang's account. Reviews in *EH.net* and the *Cambridge Journal of Political Affairs* (April 2025) summarize this critique. For the video, this is worth steelmanning — Chang's thesis is widely accepted in development economics but contested by neoclassical trade economists.

2. The Used-Clothing Trade in Africa: Scale and Effects

Volume and value

- **Global flows.** Used clothing is a multi-billion-dollar industry. About **33% of global used-clothing trade by volume goes to Africa**, a market worth about US\$1.3 billion in 2020 ([Tralac](#)) (Trade Law Centre/tralac, 2022). The top five exporters — United States, China, United Kingdom, South Korea, and Germany — account for roughly half of global secondhand exports. ([Doodahapparel](#))
- **Ghana** is the world's largest single importer of used clothing. The Kantamanto Market in Accra receives roughly **15 million garments per week** (~225,000 tonnes per year, ([Time](#)) ~3.4 million kg/week) according to the OR Foundation, *TIME Magazine* (2025), and the Anker Research Institute. Ghana imported \$214 million of used clothes in 2021 alone, ([Glimpse from the Globe](#)) and the Ghana Used Clothes Dealers' Association reported \$323 million across 2021–22 combined. ([Thebftonline](#))
- **Kenya** imported more than 185,000 tonnes of used clothing in 2023, valued at roughly KES 22 billion (~US\$140 million) — triple the 2013 level ([Ethicalbusiness](#)) (UN Comtrade, cited by *Ethical Business Africa*, 2025).
- **Total African imports** exceed 900,000 tonnes per year, with Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, and Nigeria as leading destinations. ([Ethicalbusiness](#))
- **East Africa as a region** imported \$151 million of used clothes in 2015 ([Dehai](#)) (NYT/Oxfam).

"Obroni Wawu" — Dead White Man's Clothes

In Akan (the dominant language family in Ghana), **obroni wawu** literally means "the white man has died clothes." The phrase, which became the local name for imported secondhand clothing, originally expressed bewilderment that someone could amass and abandon so much clothing — locals assumed only death could explain such excess. ([Deadwhitemansclothes](#)) The OR Foundation, a Ghanaian-American non-profit, runs the "Dead White Man's Clothes" research project

(deadwhitemansclothes.org), which is the leading documentation effort and has trained Kantamanto traders in reuse and waste-management.

Key Kantamanto facts:

- ~30,000 people work directly in the market; estimates of the broader Ghanaian secondhand value chain run as high as 2.5 million people (GhanaWeb) (Accra Street Journal; OR Foundation).
- The OR Foundation found that **about 40% of the clothing arriving in bales becomes waste** (IU Blogs) within days of landing in Ghana — too damaged or stained to sell. Greenpeace's 2022 report puts the figure at 40–60%. (IU Blogs) (The industry-aligned Ghana Used Clothes Dealers' Association disputes this, claiming only 5% is waste (Thebftonline) — flag this conflict.)
- Korle Lagoon in Accra has become "one of the most polluted bodies of water in the world," (Doodahapparel) with textile waste a major contributor (multiple sources, including the Anker Research Institute).
- Kantamanto burned in a major fire on **2 January 2025**, devastating thousands of livelihoods (Ankerresearchinstitute) (AFP/Anker Research Institute).

Documented effects on local industry

- **Frazer (2008)** is the canonical empirical citation: used-clothing imports explained roughly **40% of the decline in apparel production and 50% of the decline in apparel employment** across Africa from 1981–2000. (Wiley Online Library)
- **Sun (2017, NCSU thesis)** updated Frazer's analysis through 2012 and found used-clothing imports were responsible for about 19% of the annual decline in apparel production, 12% of the annual decline in apparel employment, 33% of the decline in textile production, and 6% of textile-employment decline. (Ncsu) (Ncsu)
- **Nigeria.** The textile sector once employed over 450,000 people across more than 175 mills (United Nigerian Textiles, Arewa, Kaduna Textiles, etc.). Between 1994 and 2005, **64% of registered textile companies disappeared (from 125 to 45)**. Direct employment fell from 137,000 in 1996 to 24,000 in 2008 (SimplVest) to under 20,000 by 2022 — roughly **half a million cotton-farmer livelihoods** were also lost (SimplVest; ResearchGate; ITRC policy brief).
- **Ghana.** Employment in textiles and clothing fell by approximately **90% between 1975 and 2010** (ResearchGate) (International Trade and Research Centre policy brief).
- **Kenya.** The cotton-to-apparel industry currently runs at less than **15% of capacity**, according to the Kenya Association of Manufacturers. (Ethicalbusiness)

- **Zambia and Zimbabwe.** Andrew Brooks (King's College London) and Karen Tranberg Hansen (Northwestern, *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia*, 2000) document that domestic textile and clothing manufacturing collapsed during the structural adjustment period of the 1980s and 1990s — though they argue Asian competition and currency devaluation mattered alongside used clothing. (Humana)

Crucial scholarship to cite:

- **Andrew Brooks**, *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes* (Zed Books, 2015) — the most thorough academic book on the trade.
 - **Brooks & Simon (2012)**, "Unravelling the Relationships between Used-Clothing Imports and the Decline of African Clothing Industries," *Development and Change* 43(6): 1265-1290.
 - **Karen Tranberg Hansen**, *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia* (2000).
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3. The 2016 East African Community Ban Attempt

What happened

At the **2 March 2016 EAC Heads of State Summit**, the bloc — then comprising Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi — issued a Joint Communiqué directing member states to **phase out used-clothing imports by 2019** (Africanews) to develop the regional textile and apparel value chain. The EAC also raised its Common External Tariff on used clothing from \$0.20/kg (or 35%) to \$0.40/kg (or 35%), whichever is higher. (Taylor & Francis Online)

In the 2016/17 budget, individual states went further:

- **Tanzania** doubled the import duty per kilogram. (SMARTASN)
- **Kenya and Uganda** matched the doubled tariff. (SMARTASN)
- **Rwanda** raised duties **by more than 1,100%** (SMARTASN) — from \$0.20/kg to \$2.50/kg, eventually reaching \$4/kg, effectively prohibiting imports. (The Africa Report)

The pressure campaign

In **March 2017**, the **Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART)** — the US trade association for used-clothing exporters — filed a formal petition with the **Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR)** asking for an out-of-cycle review of AGOA eligibility (Taylor & Francis Online) for the EAC. SMART claimed the ban (Africanews) would imperil 40,000 US jobs (Sourcing Journal) and constituted a barrier to US trade, in violation of AGOA's "elimination of barriers" condition. (Taylor & Francis Online) The total US used-clothing trade with the entire EAC was

less than \$30 million ([International Growth Centre](#)) — the International Growth Centre called the threat "highly unusual" given the trivial commercial stakes for the US.

The political settlement variation:

- **Kenya** (then exporting ~\$340- ([The Africa Report](#)) 600 million/year to the US under AGOA) blinked first. In **May 2017** it announced withdrawal from the phase-out and in **June 2017** unilaterally rolled back tariffs to pre-2016 levels. ([Taylor & Francis Online](#))
- **Uganda** and **Tanzania** also pulled back; both formally committed not to phase in a ban. ([Sourcing Journal](#)) Ugandan President Museveni reportedly stayed implementation of the "Buy Uganda Build Uganda" policy after foreign investors approached him directly. ([ResearchGate](#))
- **Rwanda** alone held firm. The USTR held an out-of-cycle review hearing on **13 July 2017**; ([Taylor & Francis Online](#)) in **March 2018** the Trump administration formally announced suspension of Rwanda's AGOA duty-free privileges on apparel, ([Quartz](#)) taking effect **29 May 2018**. (Sources: USTR official documents; Africanews; Quartz Africa; *Sourcing Journal*.)
- **Rwanda's exports under AGOA had been only ~\$1.5 million for apparel** — small enough that Rwanda could absorb the cost.

Political analysis

The leading academic study is **Pritish Behuria** (University of Manchester), "The Domestic Political Economy of Upgrading in Global Value Chains: How Politics Shapes Pathways for Upgrading in Rwanda's Coffee Sector," and especially his work on the EAC textile case. The most directly relevant article is **Andrea M. Brock / Pritish Behuria / Tom Goodfellow et al.**:

- **Andrea M. Brock**, "The global politics of African industrial policy: the case of the used clothing ban in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda," *Review of International Political Economy*, 2020 (Taylor & Francis). The article uses 21 original interviews ([ResearchGate](#)) and is the single best academic source for what happened. It documents that EAC officials reported the **World Bank "emerg[ing] from the woodwork"** to lobby against the ban during the 2017 USTR review (cited as "EAC Official, personal communication, 24 June 2018"). ([Taylor & Francis Online](#))
- **Pritish Behuria**, "The politics of late late development in renewable energy sectors: Dependency and contradictory tensions in India's National Solar Mission" — and especially *Review of International Political Economy* (2022), "Institutions, ideas and regional policy (un-)coordination: The East African Community and the politics of second-hand clothing."

Effects of Rwanda's ban

The International Growth Centre's policy brief (Frazer & Steenbergen, 2017, "Rwanda: Responding to the US threat to remove AGOA preferences") laid out the trade-off for Rwanda. Subsequent assessments are mixed:

- Domestic clothing production rose modestly; [The Africa Report](#) the Made-in-Rwanda program [Tralac](#) offered VAT and import-duty exemptions for textile investors.
- Smuggling persisted — Rwanda still recorded \$664,000 in worn-clothing imports in 2023. [The Africa Report](#)
- Informal-sector women traders lost livelihoods; [The Africa Report](#) clothing prices for consumers rose.
- Rwanda's flagship vertically integrated textile firm, **Utexrwa**, has struggled to scale.

(Cite: Tafadzwa Mupingashato, UNISA, in *The Africa Report*, 2026.)

4. AGOA, the Washington Consensus, and the Architecture of Pressure

African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)

Signed in **2000** under President Clinton, AGOA grants duty-free access to the US market for ~6,500 products from sub-Saharan beneficiary countries. **Section 104 eligibility criteria** require beneficiaries to be making "continual progress" toward, among other things, a market-based economy and the "elimination of barriers to United States trade and investment." [Africanews](#) [Africanews](#) This conditionality is the legal hook SMART used to weaponize AGOA against EAC industrial policy. The EAC apparel firms most able to take advantage of AGOA were foreign-owned exporters whose primary market was the US; [ResearchGate](#) their interests opposed those of EAC firms aiming at the regional consumer market — a structural feature highlighted by Brock (2020).

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)

The IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment lending of the 1980s and 1990s — covering more than 40 sub-Saharan African countries [Michigan Journal of Econo...](#) — required tariff reductions, currency devaluation, privatization of state-owned mills, and removal of import licensing. The textile industry was among the hardest-hit sectors:

- **Nigeria's** 1986 SAP under the Babangida government floated the naira (from N3:\$1 to N30:\$1 [SimplVest](#) by 1995), wiping out textile mills that had taken foreign-currency loans. Nigeria's WTO accession in 1995 [ResearchGate](#) and the 2005 expiry of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement compounded the damage. [SimplVest](#) (Sources: [SimplVest 2024](#); *Cogent Arts &*

Humanities, "Interrogating IMF Policies in Nigeria, 1986–2018"; World Bank Discussion Paper 13053.)

- **Ghana's** ERP from 1983 onward devalued the cedi and removed protective tariffs; combined with the end of the MFA, this is widely credited with the 90% collapse of Ghanaian textile employment between 1975 and 2010.
- **Zambia and Zimbabwe:** Hansen (2000) and Field (2000) attribute the death of domestic textile manufacturing primarily to SAP-era tariff cuts and currency depreciation, (Humana) with used-clothing imports filling the resulting consumption gap.

The Washington Consensus pattern, in Chang's framing, is the institutional mechanism that "kicks away the ladder": developing countries are denied tariff protection precisely while flooded with subsidized donations. For an excellent academic synthesis: **Joseph Stiglitz**, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002); **Robert Wade**, *Governing the Market* (1990); **Erik Reinert**, *How Rich Countries Got Rich... and Why Poor Countries Stay Poor* (2007).

The Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA)

A counterintuitive but important point for the script: the MFA (1974–2004) was protectionist, with quotas restricting exports from established Asian producers (Fibre2fashion) (Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan) (Banglapedia) into Western markets. This protectionism *helped* industrializing countries (Fibre2fashion) like Bangladesh (Banglapedia) and (briefly) several African countries by redirecting investment to them. Its 2005 expiry under WTO rules caused (Fibre2fashion) a wave of African apparel-factory closures as Chinese and Bangladeshi exporters captured market share. AGOA's textile preferences were partly a response, but they conditioned market access on free trade in used clothing — i.e., on *not* protecting African domestic markets.

5. Specific Statistics, Quotes, and Cite-able Sources

Direct quotes for the script

Paul Kagame, June 2017 (NPR/NYT/AllAfrica/tralac):

"We have to grow and establish our industries. This is the choice we find that we have to make. We might suffer consequences. Even when confronted with difficult choices, there is always a way." (Dehai)

Kagame, same period:

"We are put in a situation where we have to choose; you choose to be a recipient of used clothes with a threat hanging or choose to grow our textile industries, which Rwandans deserve at the expense of being part of AGOA." (Tralac)

Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder* (2002):

"When they were developing countries themselves, virtually all of today's developed countries did not practice free trade." [Foreign Policy In Focus](#)

Friedrich List, 1841 (the original metaphor, quoted by Chang):

"It is a very common clever device that when anyone has attained the summit of greatness, he kicks away the ladder by which he has climbed up, in order to deprive others of the means of climbing up after him."

Garth Frazer, *Economic Journal* (2008):

"Used-clothing imports are found to have a negative impact on apparel production in Africa, explaining roughly 40% of the decline in production and 50% of the decline in employment over the period 1981–2000." [Wiley Online Library](#)

Headline statistics

Statistic	Source
15 million garments/week to Kantamanto Market, Accra	OR Foundation; <i>TIME</i> (2025)
225,000 tonnes/year of used clothing into Ghana	OR Foundation
Ghana imported \$214 million of used clothes in 2021	UN Comtrade
40% of imported clothes become waste in Ghana within days	OR Foundation
30,000 people work directly at Kantamanto	OR Foundation
33% of global used-clothing trade goes to Africa	tralac (2022)
US\$1.3 billion African used-clothing import market (2020)	tralac
Used clothing reduced African apparel production by ~40%, employment by ~50% (1981–2000)	Frazer 2008
Nigeria: 64% of textile firms closed 1994–2005	Various
Nigeria: textile employment fell from 137,000 (1996) to <20,000 (2022)	ILO; SimpliVest
Ghana: textile/apparel employment fell ~90% (1975–2010)	ITRC
Kenya cotton-to-apparel industry running at <15% capacity	Kenya Assn. of Manufacturers

Statistic	Source
Bangladesh garment exports: \$1.8 million (1980) → \$47 billion (2023)	RMG Bangladesh
Bangladesh: ~4 million garment workers, ~80% women	RMG Bangladesh
South Korea: textiles = 41% of exports by 1965	Noland 2003, PIIIE
US used-clothing exports to entire EAC: < \$30 million	International Growth Centre
Rwanda raised used-clothing tariffs from \$0.20/kg → \$2.50/kg → \$4/kg	EAC Gazette
AGOA suspension on Rwandan apparel took effect 29 May 2018	USTR

Key sources to read in full

- **Garth Frazer**, "Used-Clothing Donations and Apparel Production in Africa," *Economic Journal* 118(532), 2008. (JSTOR / Wiley Online)
- **Andrew Brooks**, *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes* (Zed, 2015).
- **Karen Tranberg Hansen**, *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia* (Chicago, 2000).
- **Ha-Joon Chang**, *Kicking Away the Ladder* (Anthem, 2002) and *Bad Samaritans* (2007).
- **Andrea Brock**, "The global politics of African industrial policy," *Review of International Political Economy* (2020).
- **Pritish Behuria**, "Institutions, ideas and regional policy (un-)coordination," *RIPE* (2022).
- **The OR Foundation**, deadwhitemansclothes.org and "Stop Waste Colonialism" report.
- **Changing Markets Foundation**, "Trashion" reports (2022, 2023).
- **Greenpeace**, "Poisoned Gifts" report on the Kenya secondhand trade (2022).
- **Oxfam**, "The Impact of the Second-Hand Clothing Trade on Developing Countries" (2005).
- **International Growth Centre policy briefs** by Frazer & Steenbergen on Rwanda/AGOA (2017).
- **USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub**, "Overview of the Used Clothing Market in East Africa" (2017).

6. Counter-Arguments: The Steelman Case for the Used-Clothing Trade

A responsible script will engage the strongest opposing views.

Employment in the secondhand sector itself

- The **Humana People to People** report "Job Creation in Africa's Second-hand Clothing Sector" (2024) and a **Queen Mary University / Patrick Diamond** study (2024) estimate **2.5 million African livelihoods** depend on the secondhand trade across sorting, transport, retail, tailoring, and upcycling.
- USAID's East Africa Trade and Investment Hub estimated [\(Sourcing Journal\)](#) 355,000 [\(Quartz\)](#) direct jobs in the EAC [\(Sourcing Journal\)](#) alone, generating \$230 million in income supporting 1.4 million people. A blanket ban could cost up to 219,000 of those jobs.
- The Kenya Used Clothes Dealers Association says the sector [\(Thebftonline\)](#) provides ~\$100 million/year in tax revenue to Kenya and employs ~2 million [\(Thebftonline\)](#) Kenyans.

Affordability and consumer welfare

- Locally produced African clothing is typically more expensive and lower-quality than imported secondhand items, [\(Fibre2fashion\)](#) especially for the rural poor. Bans tend to raise consumer prices. Frazer himself noted that used-clothing imports are "beneficial for local consumers due to the availability of affordable apparel." [\(Ncsu\)](#)
- In Rwanda, women in informal markets lost livelihoods after the ban, and prices did not fall as expected [\(The Africa Report\)](#) (Mupingashato/UNISA, *Africa Report* 2026).

"Bans don't fix structural problems"

- The Trade Law Centre (tralac, 2022), the OECD, and several USAID studies argue that even without used clothing, African mills cannot compete with new Chinese, Bangladeshi, and Vietnamese imports. The DR Congo case is often cited: its textile industry collapsed primarily due to cheap *new* Chinese imitations, [\(Quartz\)](#) not used clothing.
- A 2024 Queen Mary report by Patrick Diamond found "little evidence that used clothing imports themselves are the primary driver of domestic textile manufacturing's decline in Africa," pointing to raw-material constraints and underinvestment in machinery as larger culprits. [\(Just Style\)](#)
- Brooks & Simon (2012) explicitly *unravel* the relationship: SHC imports correlate with industrial decline but causation is mediated by structural-adjustment liberalization, currency devaluation, and Asian competition.

The circular-economy / environmental case

- Defenders argue that exporting used clothes extends garment lifecycles and prevents Western landfill — an environmental positive. The Textile Recycling Association (UK) makes this case prominently.
- The counter-counter (from the OR Foundation and Greenpeace): when 40–60% of imports become immediate waste in countries without textile-recycling infrastructure, the trade is "waste colonialism" — the West externalizing its disposal problem.

Industry voices (the SMART case)

Jackie King, SMART executive director, in 2016 USTR testimony, argued that the EAC ban would: (a) cost 40,000 US jobs in collection/sorting; (b) violate AGOA's market-access conditions; (c) deprive African consumers of affordable clothing; (d) increase environmental harm by sending more clothing to landfill. Her testimony is publicly available via SMART's website (smartasn.org) and the USTR docket.

The Ghana Used Clothes Dealers' Association (Chair Jeffren Abrokwah; Joseph Obeng of GUTA) disputes that 40% of imports are waste, arguing only ~5% is, [Thebftonline](#) and characterizes Western critiques as a "Western agenda" to kill the trade. [Thebftonline](#) (Cite: *Business & Financial Times* Ghana, May 2024.)

Honest synthesis for the script

The strongest version of the "kicking away the ladder" thesis isn't that used clothing alone destroyed African textile industries — it's that the *combination* of (a) IMF/World Bank-mandated trade liberalization, (b) AGOA-style conditional market access that prohibits protective industrial policy, (c) the post-2005 collapse of the MFA quota system, and (d) a flood of free or near-free Western secondhand garments has eliminated the policy space that Britain, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Bangladesh all used to industrialize. The point isn't that donating clothes is malevolent; it's that the entire structure of the trade — and the diplomatic muscle deployed to keep it open — denies African governments tools that every successful industrializer in history relied on.

When Rwanda tried to use those tools in 2016, it was punished. When the rest of the EAC tried, it backed down under threat. That, more than any single statistic, is the story your script is telling.