

*Globalization:  
It's Affects on Kensington  
Philadelphia, PA*

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*In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
POL 380: Senior Seminar in Political Science  
Dr. Richardson  
Spring 2004  
Kutztown University*

## **Kensington, Philadelphia**

Speaking on the intersection of Kensington and Lehigh Avenues in Philadelphia, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) said, “On the same corner we watched four people die in one day. One was in his middle forties, but the other three had to have been under twenty years old. And, actually, all four of them were white. They all had gotten some bad heroin in this area and overdosed (KWRU, “*Kensington and Lehigh*”).” Unfortunately, this is an all too common description of present-day Kensington. However, this area has not always been known as the heroin capital of the United States. Globalization has negatively affected Kensington in a way that can be summed up by the above quote. It has turned into a disaster area, often resembling a third world country.

Globalization has many varying affects on different areas throughout the world. Kensington, an area of inner city Philadelphia, is one of the areas that have experienced many negative affects of globalization. Globalization is the spread of goods, services, capital, information and knowledge over multiple waves of a free market. This includes everything from manufacturing jobs, sneakers, movies, music, religion, and even drugs and prostitution. It is paramount to explore many aspects of life affected by globalization in order to argue its positive and negative affects. Kensington is an area that began to be negatively affected by globalization in the mid nineteen-eighties. Since these affects became apparent, jobs, commerce, family-life, entertainment, drug use, and prostitution have all changed in ways that have shaped Kensington into the place it is today.

### **“History of a Neighborhood”**

Kensington is an area of eastern Philadelphia not far from the Delaware River. Rudolph J. Walther (1925) wrote “Its name is derived from Kensington town and parish of Middlesex, England, and a western suburb of the city of London. Always known for its diversity, Kensington consisted of immigrants from all areas of Europe. In the seventeenth century, Kensington was a ship and boat building district, with a considerable portion of its old time inhabitants being fishermen engaged in supplying the Philadelphia markets. However, Kensington soon got into the iron and steel manufacture, and the building of steam-machinery, the outcropping of which could be seen along its riverfront areas (Walther, R.J. 1925).” Kensington developed into the industrial center of the Philadelphia region in the mid nineteen hundreds. According to the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, “In 1945, the United States had half the industrial capacity if the entire world and Philadelphia was a big part of that. There were hundreds of factories producing a wide range of goods. American Street, a thriving street in the industrial sector of Kensington, used to have a different factory on every block. People say that you could walk down American Street and find a job in five minutes (KWRU, “*American Street – History of a Neighborhood*”).”

With the industrial areas and the economy in Kensington thriving, thousands of families moved into the area seeking employment and a good quality of life. The real estate business grew as families filled streets and streets of row homes throughout Kensington. The factories were within walking distance for most families and retail businesses began to expand in the center of the neighborhood, along Kensington Avenue. As Kensington developed in the mid nineteen hundreds; high quality clothing stores,

movie theatres, bowling alleys, and other entertainment venues were built. Beautiful parks and playgrounds were built and kept in good condition by the citizens of the area and the city. The mid nineteen hundreds was a good time for Kensington. The creation of so many good-paying manufacturing jobs caused population growth, increasing commerce and ultimately raising the quality of life in the area. Janet Miller, resident of the Kensington area since the nineteen-thirties said, “within twenty years after the depression, the factory jobs really began to multiply in the area. People could find good paying jobs and support their families on a single income.” Miller added, “no one was rich or anything, but people could make a decent enough living to provide a good quality of life for their families.” Miller, whose husband is a veteran of the Korean War, never graduated high school, but was easily able to find jobs in textile and box factories in the area throughout the nineteen fifties and sixties. Her husband, Henry Miller, worked for Alden Rubber Company most of his life, a company that thrived until the nineteen-nineties. Most people in the area were like Janet Miller. Most people had little education, but were able to find decent paying jobs in factories and provide for their families. This would not always be the case.

By the nineteen seventies, Kensington was still thriving economically and socially. Decent paying factory jobs were still the main source of income for families in the area, while business and entertainment venues flourished. Sharon Kelly, Co-Chairperson of Eastern Philadelphia Organization Project (EPOP), Board member of Community Women’s Education Project (CWEP), former longtime resident, and presently an elementary school teacher in Kensington, said of the nineteen seventies, “If you wanted to work you could. It was not hard to get a job. All you had to do was know

someone who worked in one of the factories, and there were so many, you knew someone in one of them.” Kelly added, “It was a very good quality of life for a city. There were no major drug, crime or prostitution problems. With good schools nearby and the playgrounds and recreation programs, it was a great place to raise a family. In the nineteen seventies, the typical woman in Kensington graduated from high school, got married and became a housewife. The men would earn enough working in the factories to support their families on a single income. Families could afford to go out to eat, the movies, bowling and take vacations all on a single income. There were no homeless people on the streets and the city took care of the area. It was nothing like it is today.”

In the nineteen-eighties, things began to change for the people living in Kensington. Many of the manufacturing jobs, which supported the working class neighborhood, began closing down or moving south where there was a cheaper labor supply. It started in the mid-eighties, and by the mid-nineties, the quality job demand far outnumbered the job supply. All the people in Kensington were losing their factory jobs; a lot of people were forced to go on welfare. These were people who worked hard all their lives. There were no more opportunities for them to provide for their families, so they had to find some type of assistance from the government while they looked for a decent job. No one was going to get a job at McDonald’s. They could make more from welfare, and avoid the feelings of embarrassment and failure they would get from working at a fast food restaurant. This of course, in addition to the healthcare benefits they received from being on welfare, none of which a job at McDonald’s would provide. People would look and look for jobs while they were on welfare, but there were none to be found. They got use to the government supplying their income and food stamps, and

many gave up hope. Some were forced out of their homes because they could no longer afford the mortgage payments. If they were able to sell their homes at all, they were getting bottom dollar for them. No one was really excited about buying a house in Kensington by this time period. This is also when homeless people really began to appear on the streets of Kensington. There were some before, however this became more of an epidemic. People were turning to drugs to escape the reality of what happened to their lives. Hardworking people, forced onto the streets because they cannot find a job that pays enough to pay rent, provide health care, or pay other bills. These people were better off on welfare.

Life went on like this for people in Kensington for about ten years. What happened then would disrupt this area even further. President Clinton passes new welfare reform in 1996, which would require people to complete job training, and get a job, because there were now limits of the amount of time you could receive government benefits. This would shake Kensington residents into a frenzy of protests and feelings of helplessness.

By 1996, many more factories and manufacturing jobs had moved due to NAFTA and the globalization of the manufacturing industry. NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, opened the borders to free trade within the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. With Canada and Mexico able to provide an able work force for a much cheaper rate than found in the U.S., many manufacturing plants moved their operations to improve their business. This caused a larger increase in job loss and more negative affects felt down the line. These recent affects will be examined further in the next section.

**“Present Day Kensington”**  
Drugs and Prostitution

“Today Kensington continues its tradition of diversity, with its population consisting of approximately one-third White, one-third African-American, and one-third Puerto Rican. There are also small Asian and European immigrant communities. This evidence of diversity proves poverty is not a racial thing in Kensington, because it comes in all colors (KWRU, “*American Street – History of a Neighborhood*”).”

Kensington has drastically changed from the once thriving industrial hub it had been from the nineteen forties to the nineteen eighties. Presently, the two major sources of income for Kensington are welfare and drugs. This unsettling fact shows how the face of Kensington has changed over the past few decades. Kensington is one of the biggest heroin distribution centers in the country. One website, [www.guerrillanews.com](http://www.guerrillanews.com), even bestows Kensington with the prestige’s title of “America’s Heroin Capital”. On their website, visitors can take the “Drug War Reality Tour”. “This tour, sponsored by KWRU, transports busloads of tourists to the battlefield of America’s own domestic Drug War, showing them every aspect of the drug game: from where the dope arrives to where it is sold and used. Throughout the tour, street-wise KWRU members break down facts about the macro-culture and how forces like the police complicity and corporate investment are aiding and using the drug epidemic to drive Kensington’s people out of their own neighborhood in order to make room for new urban development. Kensington has fell into a vicious cycle, where children are brought up in conditions that more closely resemble those of a developing nation than the world’s new imperial superpower (Guerrilla News, “*Drug War Reality Tour*”).” Many people living in Kensington feel the police know exactly where the drugs are coming in and being sold from, however, they do not do nearly enough to stop the problem. This drug problem is large enough to wipe

out a neighborhood. The drug problem, along with the lack of jobs, is forcing people out of their homes, forcing businesses to close, to eventually leave an open area ready for urban development to come in, utilize the free area, and make a fortune building it up and selling the properties.

Another major problem in the area is prostitution. After welfare and drugs, prostitution is one of the next major sources of income in Kensington. “There’s a lot of prostitution that takes place near the corner of Kensington and Lehigh Avenues.

Definitely when an economy gets bad, one of the things that begins to happen is you see a loss of hope, and people get involved in using drugs and that kind of stuff because they just want to go away, because life is miserable and they don’t want to live. You can come down here (Kensington Avenue) at three or four in the morning and women will pull up their shirts and press their breasts against a car window, begging to be sold in order to make some money, just like images that you would see in some so-called third-world country. A lot of women are involved in the sex industry because their kids have been taken from them, for various different economic reasons and they’re caught in a vicious cycle – trying to earn money so they can get their kids back, but not being allowed to be with their kids because they are prostitutes. Prostitution takes place for as low as two bucks, and we’re talking intercourse and oral sex, for as cheap as a hit ([KWRU](#), “*Kensington and Lehigh*”).” Sharon Kelly describes a scene on Kensington Avenue in 1987 that she will never forget. “I was walking my son up to a Cub Scout meeting at a church on Kensington Avenue. I had to walk him pass the drugged up prostitutes stumbling around the streets, waving down cars, trying to find some customers. As I was walking home, a man pulled up and asked me if I was “working”. I was disgusted. I

appeared nothing like these women who looked as if they hadn't bathed in months and were strung out on drugs, but this man felt the need to ask anyway. I said "no way" and kept walking." Kelly joked, "I guess he thought he may have found a clean one. Who knows? But I will never forget that experience. That is when I knew the neighborhood was going down fast."

Living in Kensington has gone from what was considered a very good quality of life to being compared to a third world country. The question that may now be asked is: How did this happen? The answer is globalization. Now that the changes in the area have been described, it is important to understand their causes.

### **Globalization's Effect**

#### Job Loss

Globalization began to negatively affect Kensington in the nineteen eighties. In the research interviews I conducted, I asked each person to give an estimated year when they felt globalization had really begun to negatively affect the area. The consensus agreed on about 1985. Most people's reasoning for this is, it is when a lot of factories began closing down or moving out of the neighborhood. "Kensington was hit with a wave of de-industrialization which saw American jobs lost to the growing pool of sweatshop labor in Mexico and South East Asia (Guerrilla News, *Drug War Reality Tour*)."

The following excerpt from an article on the KWRU website is a perfect example of what happens to an area when factories move and people lose jobs. This process is also known as globalization.

"Today, the before-mentioned American Street in Kensington, which once had a different factory on every block, is abandoned. The factories that use to be here are all gone and so are the

jobs that used to employ the residents of the neighborhood. Factories closed down for lots of reasons – they closed due to automation (i.e. we just don't need a lot of people working in manufacturing anymore); they moved to find non-unionized workers, lower wages, less regulation; and the forces of globalization made it easier to move their sites of production to more financially attractive areas. They move to the suburbs, the southern United States or overseas.

American Street is a symbol of de-industrialization of America – and the lack of responsibility that companies have to their workers. All of the houses you see on surrounding blocks were built for factory workers. Many of them are abandoned but this neighborhood is still full of people. Instead of jobs paying \$16-\$20 an hour, they can only find minimum wage and under the table jobs with no benefits...If they can find a job at all (KWRU, "*History of a Neighborhood*")."

A large number of jobs in the Kensington area were lost within the last twenty years due to globalization of industry. Not only were a large number of jobs lost, these jobs were paying good wages. This caused people not be able to afford their mortgage payments, and forced them to move out or abandon their homes. "There is a myth that poor people, in neighborhoods like Kensington, do not want to work. This neighborhood was designed for people who worked. They didn't stop working, their jobs were taken from them (KWRU, "*History of a Neighborhood*")." Proponents of globalization argue, on a worldwide level, the process creates more jobs than it takes away. However, in certain areas such as Kensington, this is not true. In addition, the jobs that are created pay significantly less than previous manufacturing jobs. In a study titled: "*NAFTA's Impact on Pennsylvania*" (2001), conducted by Jobs with Justice and Citizens Trade Campaign, the study shows "the types of jobs created by globalization are in the service industry and wages decrease approximately 13% compared to those paid in the manufacturing industry. The costs of NAFTA to working families in Pennsylvania and the rest of the

United States – lost jobs and wages, weakened environmental laws, restrictions on democratic decision-making-have not been offset by economic gains for the majority of working families, in the United States, Mexico, or Canada (*NAFTA's Impact on Pennsylvania, p4*).” This shows the invalidity of the argument for the production of new jobs created by globalization.

According to the Drug War Reality Tour, conducted by KWRU, “from 1970 to 1996 Philadelphia was hit with a wave of industrialization which took over 250,000 jobs from the city of Philadelphia (KWRU, *Drug War Reality Tour*).” Many of these manufacturing jobs came from Kensington, which was the leading area for industrial jobs in Philadelphia during that time period. This evidence shows how huge the amount of jobs lost actually was during that time period. The time period is, not by coincidence, the same time period described by people who I have interviewed as the time when the neighborhood really started deteriorating. There is a direct correlation present between job loss and deterioration of the neighborhood.

In a study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), “researches report a percentage increase of 259% in long-term unemployment from 2000-2003 for manufacturing workers (Allegratto, Sylvia & Stettner, Andy, “*Educated, experienced, and out of work*”, 2004, p1).”

“In Pennsylvania, an EPI study shows that there were 27,000 direct job losses in manufacturing since NAFTA was implemented in 1993. This was evident from rural areas to urban areas such as Kensington (Department of Labor Statistics, April 2001, taken for *NAFTA's Impact on Pennsylvania, p2*).”

A major example of globalization negatively affecting jobs, and Kensington in general, is the Schmidt's Brewery.

“The building has been there (in Kensington) since 1920, and it use to house main offices, the brewery and the bottling plant for the Schmidt's Beer Company. It employed thousands of people. However, when the label was sold for millions of dollars, it began to lay workers off. Over a period of three years more than 1400 workers lost their jobs at this plant, which moved to South Carolina, and the company closed down permanently.

The former owner of the property owes the city over \$3.5 million in back taxes. Nothing has been done to collect those taxes or to make the owner take responsibility for demolishing this building. The building has fallen apart – becoming an eyesore and more importantly, a threat to the community. Children often go into the building to play. Homeless people live in this building. It's just a matter of time before someone is killed because of a collapsed ceiling or wall. Downtown or in the suburbs, something would be done, but sitting here year after year, it's just another reminder that people in Kensington don't really matter (KWRU, *Schmidt's Brewery: What's Left*).”

Some people may pose the argument that a company moving to South Carolina, from Philadelphia, is not an example of globalization. However, to a person in Kensington, South Caroline is as global as Afghanistan. These people lost their good paying jobs, because cheaper labor was found elsewhere. The spread of jobs due to the availability of a cheaper labor supply is an example of globalization. In some examples this spread in to another country, but in this particular example it is only state-to-state. However, it is the whole concept of globalization that includes this state-to-state spread. Again, the concept of jobs spreading due to the availability of a cheaper labor supply is an example of globalization. This happened with the Schmidt's Brewery in Philadelphia; therefore it is a form of globalization, which caused the move.

This example is just one of the many factories, abandoned building, and eyesores people in Kensington face everyday. When tent cities are set up by the homeless on properties like these, or even when people attempt to clean them up, they are often harassed by police for trespassing. People are trying to work for the benefit of the community, but instead, the city and police choose to protect a business owner who owes the city millions of dollars, and has let his property deteriorate.

Evidence has been stated to show how NAFTA has caused the loss of manufacturing jobs. Now it is important to examine the other affects that trickle down from a loss of jobs.

The previous description of Kensington being an area where families can enjoy a good quality of life is now out of date. In research interviews, I have found the present-day quality of life in Kensington to be described as very poor. In less than twenty years, the quality of life, described by interview subjects, has gone from very good to very poor. Why such a change?

When people began to lose manufacturing jobs, the jobs that could support a family on a single income. Families were forced to work jobs that paid lower wages. Many of these jobs also did not provide the same benefits, if any, as manufacturing jobs had. This posed a huge problem for families with children. Now, instead of maybe one parent working, making a decent wage, and having healthcare benefits for their family, we begin to see both the husband and wife taking jobs to get by, most with little or no benefits. Some families are forced to move into smaller homes, apartments, with family, just to survive. This lifestyle puts a lot of strain on people and causes some to lose hope of making a decent living. Some families work so much and still cannot make a decent

living. In the nineteen eighties, de-gentrification of housing also began to occur because people were less able to clean their yards, cut their grass or fix up their houses because of the lack of time and money.

Every year, from 1985 or so, to present, there were less and less jobs in Kensington. People who were able to find jobs outside of the neighborhood, downtown or in the suburbs, and make a decent wage, started to move out of the area because it was deteriorating. Abandoned factories, and the homes of those workers who lost their jobs in factories who moved, began to cause eyesores and health hazards in the area. Factories which produced chemicals often left traces of environmental dangers that were not cleaned up and became a hazard for the community.

#### Changes in Family Life

Family life really began to deteriorate in the nineteen nineties. Sharon Kelly explains, “With the loss of good manufacturing jobs with benefits, men could no longer support a family on their own. This caused some couples not to marry, because a married woman could not get the same health benefits for their child that they could if they stayed single. This caused many women not to marry, and led to a lot of single-mother families. The government supposedly wants to promote family values, but the very programs they design go against their ideology.” Kelly added, “the uneducated really suffered and it started with job loss and led to a loss of family and ultimately to a loss of human dignity for some people. That is why we see women turning to prostitution and drugs. They feel there is no other way.”

## Welfare Problems

Welfare “reform” legislation passed by President Clinton in the early 1990’s really hit Kensington at a difficult time. An area which traditionally was not dependent on welfare, because the hardworking people made a decent living, now had to turn to government programs and assistance because of the loss of jobs. The problem was, at this same time welfare reform legislation was being passed that would cripple people’s ability to get a better education or job.

An article on the affect of welfare reform on Kensington explains:

“Kensington is the poorest district in the state of Pennsylvania. The median income in the area is constantly declining. After the factories shut down and people lost their jobs here, welfare and drugs became the two major sources of income. If you want to feed your kids in Kensington it’s pretty much one or the other. Now with welfare reform, welfare rolls are declining by half. Most studies show that people leaving welfare work sporadically for minimum wage, and a lot of them become homeless. So that leaves drugs. Or prostitution. Or some other criminal behavior that allows you to make a living.

Families on welfare now face a five-year lifetime limit. After two consecutive years, you have to be working twenty hours a week to get benefits. This rule has made a lot of people drop out of college to meet the work requirement, because in Pennsylvania education doesn’t count towards your twenty hours a week. The mayor of Philadelphia called the welfare reform affect on the city, “a train wreck waiting to happen.” There is a push to cut people off from welfare because there are financial incentives for the welfare department if they cut a certain number of people.

Everyday there are more people on the streets because of this welfare reform. By setting limits for welfare without guaranteeing enough jobs for all the people that needed them, the government set the stage for an upheaval. The only benefit to Kensington is that people with money can afford to come here and buy their drugs.

Former Philadelphia Police Commissioner Timoney was quoted in a Philadelphia newspaper as saying “a police mobilization called “Operation Sunrise” (the largest of its kind in

twenty years) was introduced to “take control” of the areas most affected by welfare reform (KWRU, *Welfare Office: The Clock is Ticking*.)”

This is proof to show the programs set up that are supposed to help people who cannot find jobs, are a failure. There is no help for these people, and the police are ready to deal with the backlash from the people most affected. Instead of trying to help find a solution to the problems, the police, like other government organizations, would rather just deal with the problems instead of trying to fix them.

This shows there is no secret about the damage caused by welfare reform. Police know the problems and crimes that are caused when people are forced to do whatever they can to survive. The government knows the cause and negative affects of their programs before they are implemented, but they proceed anyway and further damage areas such as Kensington.

One welfare office had a bulletin board, which read, “any job is a good job.” They had clipped an ad for go-go dancers out of the newspaper and posted it on the board. This is a sad example of how the job field has changed in Kensington.

#### Business / Commerce

With people losing their jobs, those who have jobs moving, and those who stay having little money to spend shopping, many business that once flourished on Kensington Avenue began to close in the mid to late nineteen nineties. In a research interview with Sharon Kelly, she stated:

“The quality of the stores began to deteriorate to meet the level of prices people could afford. All the good stores moved into better neighborhoods in the Northeast. Franklin Mills, a huge mile-long mall, complete with hundreds of outlet stores was built in the Northeast, and families began to shop there. The people who lived in Kensington in the mid nineties did not have the money to spend to keep the stores open. Those who moved out of the area were certainly not going come

back to shop there. Wal-Mart's were beginning to be built in surrounding areas, and people went there to shop too. All the mom and pop corner stores were going out of business by the mid nineties. On the one corner of the street I lived on, I saw about ten business start and then fold within a five year period in the same building. It was a joke. The neighbors joked the building was cursed. But it was not the building, it was the neighborhood."

As businesses closed, so did the movie theatres, bowling alleys, and roller skating rinks. I remember when I was a kid; I would go to the Kensington roller rink every week. By 1993, the place turned into a gang hang out, drug dealer base, and a dangerous, graffiti ridden place. Parents wouldn't let their children go there anymore and it eventually closed down. Movie theatres in the area closed for the same type of reasons. People who lived in the area didn't have money to go to the movies very often, and people who lived outside Kensington were not going to come into the neighborhood to see a movie. Business and commerce, as well as recreation were feeling the trickle down affects of job loss in the area.

### Life as a Youth

In the early nineteen nineties, during my teenage years in Kensington, community centers, playgrounds, parks, and schoolyards quickly became gang havens. The city cut funding to a lot of the parks and recreation centers, causing swimming pools to close, sports organizations to fold, as options for children in the community declined. These parks and playgrounds turned into hangouts for local gangs. Neighborhood teens would gather and drink, do drugs, sell drugs, harass people and other children. These playgrounds became ugly places. With most kids lacking adequate adult supervision, kids were left to hang out with their friends at these parks and get into trouble. Kids saw the neighborhood they lived in, and it was hard for them to care. It is hard to have hope for a

future with the things you see as a teenager in Kensington. Personally, I saw people doing drugs, beat up, stabbed, shot at, and overdose right in front of me. That is a normal year for a teenager in Kensington, not lifetime experiences.

A lot of kids in Kensington see their parents struggle and fight a lot, not being able to provide for their families. Many of them lose respect for their parents and do not want to listen to what they have to say. I have three close friends who all dropped out of high school. I asked one of them, Jesse Wainwright (now 23 years old) why he didn't finish school. He said: "I hated it. It was boring." I said, didn't your parents make you go? He replied: "My mom and dad were divorced. I lived with my mom. She tried to make me go to school, but I would just go somewhere to cut all day. After a while, she gave up. My two older brothers dropped out of high school before me. I knew I would find a job without going to high school or college." I asked him: when he was younger, if he thought he would find a good job that could help him improve his quality of life? He said: "I knew I would never be rich or have a lot of money, so I figured I would just get a job that would get me by." I said: So you thought there was no hope of improving much? He replied: "Nope." I could only think about how said this is, and wonder why I turned out different. But I am not the majority. Most of the people I know who grew up in Kensington are much like Jesse. They find little hope for the future because of what they experience everyday in the present.

### **Summary of Affects of Globalization**

Kensington was once an area where a job could be found in five minutes. It was once a place where a single income from a manufacturing job was enough to comfortably support a family. Parents felt safe letting their children play outside. There was little fear

of kids playing in unsafe abandoned buildings, getting harassed by drug dealers, or worse. Kensington Avenue had blocks of stores families would shop at and restaurants they would eat. Movies theatres were filled, Roller rinks packed with kids skating around having a good, safe time. Unemployment and welfare, crime and drugs, these were not huge issues.

Kensington was not a set of a movie, or “Leave it to Beaver Land”. It was far from perfect. However, it was described by people as a very good city to live in and raise a family. My research shows this was the consistent view of Kensington from a number of people for many years. So what changed? The answer is, globalization began to affect the area.

The consensus of people interviewed agreed the “downfall” of Kensington began in the mid to late nineteen eighties. This coincides with the exact time when factory jobs were really starting to be lost in high volumes. This is not coincidence. There is a direct relationship between the two.

### Opposing Arguments

Many people in the world view globalization totally different from the way the people living in Kensington may view it. People see globalization as a way to develop and improve a world economy, interacting nations via economics, and spreading cultures to other nations who normally may not be aware of them. These things are considered some major positive effects of globalization. However, the people of Kensington do not see these positive consequences really positively affecting their lives. The people of Kensington may care less about the culture and government of India, however, what they do care about is the person in India who may have taken their job. This is the lens the

people of Kensington look through. It is very different from the one looked through by upper-class American businessmen.

When I asked each person I interviewed, what are the positive affects of globalization on Kensington, only one said: “cheaper prices at Wal-Mart.” That was the one and only positive response I received.

Advocates of globalization talk about the spread of cultures and diversity caused by globalization. Kensington was always a diverse area, so there was no significant change there.

Some advocates of globalization argue the spread of technology helps people communicate, and links the global world together. The problem is, this means nothing to a person living on the street in Kensington. Cheaper prices at Wal-Mart do not mean much to a person who can't afford rent. The quality of clothing or plastic goods is not concern of a woman trying to earn money via prostitution to buy food for her child.

A big problem with globalization is, the government fails to provide proper programs, funding, healthcare, childcare, education, etc., for those who are “left behind” by the its development. There are many people who are “left behind” in places like Kensington, with no way out. What can a person do when they can only find minimum wage jobs with no benefits, their welfare access is restricted or has run out, and they cannot provide for their families? The answer and result is apparent in present day Kensington. Crime, drugs, prostitution, and abandoned buildings, have all become staples of an area that was once known for hardworking individuals looking for a decent life. The quote from the article titled: *History of a Neighborhood*, says: “People didn't stop

working, their jobs were taken from them (KWRU, *History of a Neighborhood*).” I believe this is true, and the main negative effect of globalization.

The manufacturing jobs that once existed in Kensington did not become obsolete or fail to exist any longer, they just moved elsewhere due to globalization. The government’s lack of programs and support for area so hurt by globalization is where the additional problems resulted.

“In the early 1990’s, American Street in Kensington was labeled as part of the *Empowerment Zone Project* from the “Enterprise Communities Empowerment Zone” legislation. At that time, \$17 million was given, mostly through corporate tax breaks, specifically to the strip on land on American Street. There is no development apparent from that money. A total of 180 jobs were created from that \$17 million dollars (KWRU, *American Street*).” Those numbers just do not add up.

Globalization is, among other things, the spread of trade, information and capital. On a global scale, these things can be made to seem perfect. Advocates argue they promote world peace via economic bonds. Globalization is said to increase competition, in turn, increasing the quality of products, while keeping prices down, to win the consumer’s dollar. Advocates argue globalization promotes tolerance of cultures, religions and ways of life via communication, technology and the spread of information. All of these things work well in theory on a global level.

### **Conclusion**

Globalization is said to have created thousands of jobs in third-world countries, increasing their quality of life ten-fold, closing the economic gap between countries and bringing each one closer together.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) wrote a brief on globalization in November of 2000. In that brief, the ICC lists fourteen ways globalization develops, works and promotes global growth in many areas. However, not one of those sections solves the problems a single mother in Kensington faces today.

Globalization may work in theory, but there needs to be changes from individual governments to make it work domestically and locally for all people. Until a plan is in place that can do so, globalization will continue to destroy areas such as Kensington and many others in the state of Pennsylvania and throughout the United States. Through my research I found no answers from people I interviewed or information I gathered that showed me how globalization is helping people in Kensington.

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## Interviews

1) Steve Honeyman: (2004)

A) Co-Chairperson of Eastern Philadelphia Organization Project (EPOP)

2) Sharon Kelly: (2004)

A) Co-Chairperson of Eastern Philadelphia Organization Project (EPOP)

B) Board Member of Community Women's Education Project (CWEP)

C) Elementary School teacher in Kensington

D) Former longtime resident of Kensington

3) Janet Miller: (2004)

A) Former factory worker in Kensington area

B) Former longtime resident of Kensington area

4) Jesse Wainwright: (2004)

A) Twenty-three year old resident from Kensington