



The Dark Side of Fast Fashion

Benji Boyd, Freshman

The internet has surrounded us with everything we could ever want, and allowed us to access it all with a click of a mouse or a tap of a finger. Gone are the days of waiting months for brands to release new lines of fashionable pieces. Now, with the rise of popular online stores like Shein and Romwe, it's possible to keep up with what the influencers are wearing the second they post videos in their new outfits.

Unfortunately, the brands that provide this luxury are, more often than not, far from perfect. At first glance, they sell hundreds of fashionable pieces at unbelievably low prices. However, if you delve a little deeper, you'll find a list of cons for buying from them that well outweigh five dollar tops and ninety-nine cent jewelry.

For one, as the prices suggest, the quality of their products is extremely poor. These clothes are not designed to last; they are designed to be produced cheaply and sold in bulk. When their short lives are over, their owners will return to the website and buy more to replace what they lost, and the cycle will repeat all over again.

Common complaints from those who have bought from these websites include that the clothes take a long time to ship, and there's no customer service to voice complaints. This is because most companies ship their products from China and other destinations around the world using the cheapest route to your doorstep, which isn't always the quickest. The primary concern for the companies or corporations that own these businesses is to sell as much as they can at low prices. This is contrary in the history of high fashion, which usually entails a smaller amount of clothes for a greater sum of money. However, due to the social pressures that dictate the rise and fall of trends, people are driven to spend just as much money on cheap clothes as they would on designer brands by simply buying more.

Environmental Impact:

Naturally, you can't blame retailers for trying to get as much out there as possible at low prices. The rise of fast fashion has made stylish clothes far more accessible, and allowed people with less money to purchase more essential items.

However, it's impossible to ignore the environmental impacts that these major brands have on the regions where they manufacture products and employ workers. If you're someone who cares about the environment, you'll be familiar with a couple of courtesies commonly taken by citizens in order to reduce their carbon footprint, such as taking alternative transportation, recycling, and saving electricity. While these efforts are valiant, the main source of carbon emissions isn't a couple of cars idling in their driveways, or throwing a plastic container in the trash. It's a handful of major industries, usually run by a handful of individuals, which employ large scale factories and unsafe means of production that

The Age of the Internet: Modern Fast Fashion

contribute the most out of any other factor to global climate change. The fast fashion industry alone makes up around 8% of carbon emissions.

In order to maintain such low prices, brands generally base their factories in undeveloped areas of the world, where they can exploit the natural resources and the available workforce. If you check the tags on the back of your clothing, you'll see a couple of recurring locations such as China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. These places have all suffered under the strain of fast-fashion, and there seems no end in sight for the draining of their people and resources.

Water is another major concern, especially for the underdeveloped countries who are losing their drinking water to major textile factories. These companies generally target regions with looser environmental regulations in order to dodge certain precautions. Chemical waste is a serious threat to biodiversity in these areas. Some chemicals can prove extremely dangerous or potentially lethal to local wildlife and humans alike. By using up so much water and putting in no effort to keep their waste out of the local waterways, these factories are endangering the lives of their workers and destroying the environment they rely on for resources. Unfortunately, the environmental impact isn't the only secret the fashion industry is hiding . . .

The Fashion Industry's Dark Secret

Have you heard of the Uyghur people? Probably not. They are a mainly Muslim ethnic group, predominantly located in the Northwestern region in China (Xinjiang), that the Chinese government has tried their very hardest to oppress and erase from history. But now, the Uyghur people, and their treatment under the Chinese government, has become the forefront of a massive effort from human rights groups around the world to shed light on China's inhumane policies and the genocide currently occurring behind closed doors.

Genocide is defined as "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." The Chinese government has detained over a million Uyghurs in what they call "re-education" camps, where there have been leaked reports of forced labor, torture, inhumane conditions, and even forced sterilization in an attempt to stop Uyghur women from having children. While the Chinese government officially claims that these camps are to prevent racial divides by teaching the Uyghur people to be more Chinese, activists and those who experienced "re-education" themselves have other things to say.

Perhaps China's promise that no genocide is going on in Xinjiang would be taken more seriously if their behavior in the past suggested it to be true. However, China has been previously accused of targeting important Muslim figures, destroying tombs and

places of worship belonging to the Uyghur people, and directing immigration of the Chinese majority into Xinjiang in an attempt to thin the Uyghur population. What does any of this have to do with fast fashion? Well, China is the largest producer of cotton in the world, and their textiles are used by nearly every major clothing brand in the world. And I bet you can guess in which region 84% of the cotton is grown and processed. As awareness of the Uyghurs' plight grows, more and more brands have been questioned about the sources of their materials, and are being held accountable for profiting from forced labor. Unfortunately, no matter what the spokespeople say, no brand can prove that their products are untainted by forced labor and genocide, and it's as easy to lie about cutting off ties from Xinjiang as it is to continue exporting from the region. Even if a brand was able to sever their connections with Xinjiang suppliers, much of the raw material provided by the camps is shipped to other countries and processed in factories there. Many brands are making an effort to put economic pressure on China, but we've left this problem alone for too long, and allowed the web of unethical sourcing to extend through nearly every corner of the fashion industry.

More Sustainable Options

If any of this concerns you, or you feel that you'd like to learn more about what

you can do to improve your fashion consumption, please check out the website goodonyou.eco If you click "Brand Ratings," you can type in any major fashion brand and it will provide a review of their environmental awareness, ethics, quality of products, and other factors that could help you become more aware of what you buy.

Another safe option for sustainable consumption is buying from local thrift stores, such as the Magic Hat. Recycling clothes is way better than throwing them away when you don't need them anymore, and buying used clothing is a relatively cheap way to cut down on your carbon footprint. And finally, if you want to become more aware of what large corporations, as well as foreign governments, are doing behind the scenes of your favorite brands, please read up on the topic and educate yourself. The sources for this article include "Who are the Uyghurs and why is China being accused of genocide?" by BBC News, "How Fast Fashion Causes Environmental Poverty" by Borgen Magazine, and "Virtually entire fashion industry complicit in Uyghur forced labour, say rights groups" by The Guardian. The only way to convince brands to stop using unethical means of production is to stop the overconsumption that feeds on it. You can be part of the solution, if you want to be.

Will Wood: Music Recommendation

Georgia Lloyd, Junior

How to start when talking about Will Wood. I could start with his dedicated fanbase, his originaive art, or maybe the refreshing chaos that trails his every step. Unfortunately, the being that is Will Wood can not be put into words. Perhaps that is why he chose music as his creative medium, because nothing else could successfully liberate the abstractions that rest in Will Wood's brain.

Will Wood (music also released under Will Wood and the Tapeworms) grew up in New Jersey and started writing songs at age 13. Little is known about his personal life, as he is known to give conflicting accounts of even the most basic information during interviews. However, he is extremely open about his struggles with mental health and addiction, both of which, he says, have improved since the start of his career. He now donates portions of his income to mental health research so others can recover like he has.

Often emulating these mental health struggles, much of Wood's music holds dark themes, like death and depression. He sings of the problems in American society and how they affect mental health treatment as well as his general philosophies and his struggles with gender identity. His lyrics are complex, and difficult to decipher, containing out of the box rhyme schemes, references to unsettling historical facts, and armories of awe-inspiring alliteration. Wood's style has been called "busy" as it is often fast paced and contains multitudinous instruments, including saxophone,



trumpet, base, electric and acoustic guitar, ukulele, drums, piano (usually played by Wood, himself), and many others. He has said he disagrees with the concept of genres and prefers to make any music he feels compelled to make, regardless of whether it fits with music he has made before. His influences are eclectic, some of which being folk, pop, jazz, rock and roll, latin music, and klezmer.

Despite all of this seeming like a recipe for disaster, Wood makes it work. He is an expert of his chaos, with various instruments running together to make a euphony of sound worthy of both dancing and crying. The high-energy music is a joy to watch and listen to due to the band always playing with precise mastery of their instruments. He simply has a certain flair that makes it impossible to be bored on his account and, although his sound may not be for everyone, I highly recommend his music to anyone who likes a healthy dose of chaos.

His website can be found by searching willwood.net and his music can be found on spotify, youtube, soundcloud and various other music sites under Will Wood or Will Wood and The Tapeworms.

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