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Fast Fashion Is Cheap, Trendy, And Destructive— It's Time To Slow It Down.

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➤ **“Fast fashion” is a buzz phrase but what does this term really mean? And as we continue to encourage the fashion industry to move towards a more sustainable and ethical future, it’s helpful to know what we’re up against.**

Fast fashion is a design, manufacturing, and marketing method focused on rapidly producing high volumes of clothing. Fast fashion garment production leverages trend replication and low-quality materials (like synthetic fabrics) in order to bring inexpensive styles to the end consumer.

These cheaply made, trendy pieces have resulted in an industry-wide movement towards overwhelming amounts of consumption. This results in harmful impacts on the environment, garment workers, animals, and, ultimately, consumers’ wallets.

Many people debate what came first: the desire for fresh looks at an alarming rate or the industry’s top players convincing us that we’re behind trends as soon as we see them being worn. It’s hard to say, but there is no doubt that we thirst for the “next best thing” every day of our consumer-driven lives. (“10 Things I Hate About You,” anyone?)

Yet, with this increased rate of production and questionable supply chains, corners are inevitably cut. Clothing is made in a rushed manner, and brands are selling severely low-quality merchandise. There isn’t enough time for quality control or to make sure a shirt has the right amount of buttons—not when there is extreme urgency to get clothing to the masses.

The fast-fashion manufacturing process leaves a lot to be desired, and pieces are often thrown away after no more than a few wears. The same urgency that throws quality out the window also keeps the costs of these garments incredibly low. Companies like Topshop and Fashion Nova are greatly concerned with their bottom line and are banking on the “ocean of clothing” they churn out for profit.

These brands earn millions of dollars while selling pieces cheaply because of the sheer number of items they sell, no matter the cost or markup. And garment workers are undoubtedly being paid well below the minimum wage. In the documentary “The True Cost,” author and journalist Lucy Siegle summed it up perfectly: “Fast fashion isn’t free. Someone, somewhere is paying.”

Moral lines get blurred, however, when factoring in how much more accessible and size-inclusive fast fashion can be. Ethical fashion advocates have worked hard to unpack this complicated narrative, but the cost and exclusive-sizing are still barriers for many.

The Rise of Slow Fashion

Although the fashion industry as a whole is guilty of committing many crimes against people and the environment, it is most evident when it comes to fast fashion. Society’s obsession with consumerism may make it hard to quit, but better options are out there.

Slow fashion offers an alternative, with mindful manufacturing (sometimes including vertically integrated and in-house production), fair labor rights, natural materials, and lasting garments. It’s encouraging to know that there are brands, communities, and individuals out there fighting for the planet and the safety of garment workers.

By buying garments from responsible brands, speaking up for social responsibility and accountability, and going through secondhand shops, we can ensure agency and that we’re advocating for the environment and others.

gifting green

This holiday season, give a gift you can feel good about. Wow your family and friends (and the Earth!) with these timeless and eco-friendly ideas.



Quilted Slippers (printfresh, \$138)

Quilted faux fur slippers, made from 100% cotton poplin fabric. Designed in Philadelphia and crafted by artisans in India. The perfect complement to your favorite holiday pajamas!

Fleece Down Jacket (Patagonia, \$299)

An ultrawarm, casual, everyday contemporary jacket made of 100% recycled polyester ½"-pile fleece, insulated with 700-fill-power Recycled Down (duck and goose down reclaimed from down products) and lined with 100% recycled polyester ripstop to block cold and wind. Fair Trade Certified™ sewn.



Socks that Plant Trees (uncommon goods, \$15)

Buying one pair of these socks will give back \$1 (enough to plant ten trees) to Trees for the Future, a non-profit focused on reforestation and helping communities across sub-Saharan Africa. Choose between a chevron pattern that recalls the veins on a leaf or an all-over motif of geometric conifers. Both pairs are finished at the ankle with an embroidered evergreen. Made with organic cotton in India.

Resuable Tote Bag (Public Goods, \$24)

Made of 100% organic cotton. At 13 x 15 inches, it perfectly fits a laptop and offers secure storage for wallets, keys and other personal belongings. This cotton tote bag is ideal for working on the go, as a carry-on bag for travel, and of course as a replacement to disposable shopping bags.



Super-Plush Robe (brooklinen, \$99)

This Super-Plush Robe is the ultimate in plushness and softness and made of combed, long-staple 100% Turkish cotton. STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX® Certified. This fabric has been independently tested for harmful substances according to strict global criteria.





▶▶▶▶▶ Brand Spotlight: *Aliya Wanek*

Founded in 2016, ALIYA WANEK is an eponymous, black-owned womenswear label that focuses on exploring the connection between one's identity and style. Their mission is to create comfortable, stylish clothing ethically and sustainably as an extension of the wearer's individuality. If not sewing the garments herself, Aliya works with two small factories and local contractors in the Bay Area to produce and dye her garments, always taking into consideration ways to reduce the brand's environmental impact.

When asked what inspires her work she states, "I'm really sensitive to color in my surroundings so I'm always looking at buildings, landscapes, and bridges for color pairings. Also, comfort and style are very important to me so those descriptors are always at the forefront when I'm designing. I very much try to maintain this focus of just pulling on, over, or up a garment with the ease of knowing you're showing your style without too much effort or thought into it."