

The Importance of Textile reuse and recycling and the environmental impact of Fast Fashion.

You might have heard the expression “Fast Fashion” and been intrigued over the opportunity to find low prices on the latest trends in jeans or dresses. Who does not love a good bargain? The sad truth is that the fashion industry is the 2nd greatest polluter of local freshwater in the world!

Fast fashion is a term coined for our appetite for ever cheaper clothes and shoes. With that, we also encourage and sustain a system where the people who make our fashion garments are paid next to nothing and we look away when we hear about terrible working conditions.

The amount of new garments bought by Americans and Europeans have tripled since the 1960s. Every year the world as a whole consumes more than 80 billion items of clothing. Fast Fashion companies makes that possible by constantly churning out lower quality but cheaper apparel. The idea is that speedy mass production combined with cheap labor will make clothes cheaper for those buying them, thus allowing these fast fashion trends to maintain economic success.

But what are we gaining? The environmental impact is huge. The fashion industry is responsible for 10 percent of the carbon footprint of the world. That makes fashion *the 10th* most polluting industry in the world!

Each year, over two billion t-shirts are sold worldwide and 520 million pairs of jeans are sold in the U.S. With the production of one t-shirt using up 700 gallons of water and one pair of jeans using up 1,500 gallons, it is easy to understand why the call to curb textile waste is urgent.

Furthermore, the production of cotton and other fibers require large amount of pesticides. It is said that in the garment factory districts of China you can see next season’s fashion colors by looking at the runoff waters in the nearby rivers!

As we know; Climate Change is Real. At One World Center Clothes Collection, this is written on our clothing collection bins to emphasize the urgency and necessity of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

In 2018, we collected 1.5 million pounds of usable clothes and shoes from our 550 clothing collection bins. In 2019 our goal is to reach 1.9 million pounds. There is great willingness from the public to donate their unwanted clothes and shoes in an easy convenient way. These items are made available for people all over the world. From our warehouse in Albany, we ship clothes and shoes to Nicaragua, Guatemala, North Africa as well as domestically to Texas.

Overall, the product we pull out of our bins are in good shape. Of all the product we collect, only 11-12% on average is waste, such as be the occasional mattress dumped outside the bins, wet items, books and other items that we cannot use. Our drivers bring it all to the warehouse – we take the good with the bad, and that is a small price to pay for all the usable product collected.

The need is great. The growing inequality between “the haves and the have not’s” be it within our own country or in the wider world, means that 70% of the world’s population depends on 2nd hand clothes and shoes to have access to and wear decent clothing.

Here is how recycling and reusing clothes and shoes is connected to help curb Global Warming & Climate Change:

The most effective way to reduce textile waste is to buy used clothing from thrift stores and donate or reuse your clothes instead of throwing them away. The EPA estimates that the average American throws away about **70 pounds of clothes** a year, most of which are destined to rot away in landfills. Only **15-20%** of that is recycled. Why toss a shirt into the trash where it will waste away in a landfill when you could give it new life instead? **A shirt reused saves the environmental cost of a shirt produced.**

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