

# The Environmental Faults of Fashion

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## Spark of Sustainability

BooRay Clo. is a sustainable clothing company that I launched in 2019. When I determined that I needed a new jacket for an upcoming trip to a fashion camp at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM), the idea was sparked. I knew that I did not want to buy a new jacket but also knew that I did not own an appropriate jacket. I saw a jean jacket with the back of the jacket painted. Although I was hesitant to mess up the only jean jacket I owned, I knew I would never wear it in its current state. So, I took the plunge and set out to paint my jean jacket.

While at FIDM, I received endless compliments on the jacket and was asked by their fashion club director to make a YouTube video on tips for how to create a custom jacket. My jacket's interest was not something I anticipated, and it led to a spark of creativity and an entrepreneurial attitude that maybe I could turn this into a business. At this same time, my passion for sustainable approaches to fashion and the impact that fast fashion brands have on the fashion industry peaked. My new understanding of recycling/upcycling clothing, mixed with the interest in my jacket, led me to build BooRay Clo.

Throughout my life, I have engaged in many artistic endeavors. These artistic endeavors have generated many scraps from previously finished projects. So much so that I have a dedicated room for my scraps. I decided to use these scraps when creating my upcycled designs as a sustainable approach. Everything gets used and reused differently. I use these collected materials to upcycle the pieces I find at thrift stores.

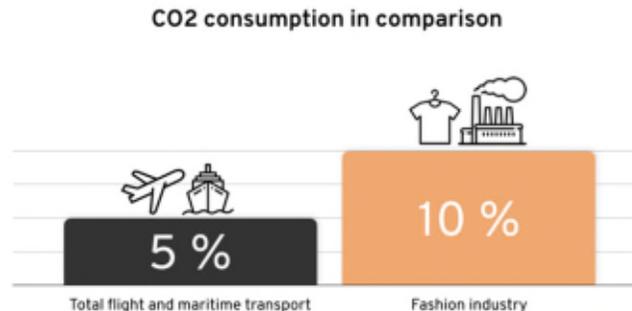
The impact of reusing textile scraps is significant. Figure 1 showcases the lifecycle of donated clothing. My business falls into the 10-20% stage of thrift stores. I shop local thrift stores and sift through the donations until I find salvageable items to upcycle. I then evaluate my items and design upcycled creations that ultimately build into a collection of garments. After planning collections and gathering inspiration, I use leftover scrap fabric and supplies to bring my ideas to life. Upcycling means giving new life to an old piece of clothing. The new owner can find pride in the upcycled item from an environmental, ethical, and fashion perspective.



Fig. 1 The Lifecycle of Goods

However, designing and creating upcycled clothing is just half of the battle. The consumer has to be committed to the mission of shopping sustainably as well. Another goal of my business is to educate the consumer about the impact my products have on the environment. I want to educate my consumers about the apparel industry's impact worldwide and promote this new wave of sustainable fashion. Information is power. For this reason, I consistently reference other sustainable fashion options on my website. Knowing how to solve this problem outside of my small business brings more awareness to the ease of shopping sustainable clothing.

The amount of inhumane labor, water usage, CO2 production, and dye chemical abuse due to the fashion industry should be illegal. Figure 2 compares air and ocean travel CO2 emission with fashion production's CO2 emissions. This example of pollution demonstrates that most consumers have no idea the extent of abuse the fashion industry has on the environment and the workers. This information can shock people who do not live in countries heavily polluted by clothing production and therefore do not comprehend the extent of the problem.



**Fig. 2** CO2 Consumption Comparison

### **BooRay's Mission and Transition to More Clothing**

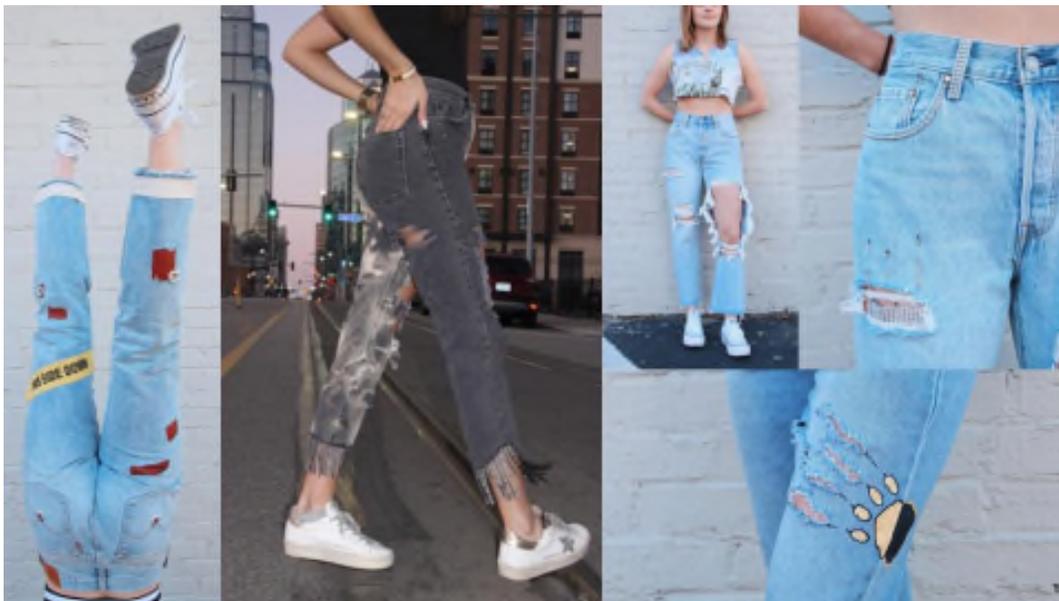
BooRay's motto is "Own Pace" because it represents every person's individuality and celebrates doing things their own way. My designs are so unique because I want everyone to find a piece that speaks to them. A significant part of designing long-lasting clothing is making sure the consumer is buying it for the right reasons, meaning they will invest in a piece they can wear for years. Unfortunately, due to fast fashion, this is not easy to accomplish. Many consumers are on the hunt for the next fad or trend. These styles last a couple of months and then are considered outdated. This toxic cycle has shortened the lifespan and removed the individuality of the clothing. Fashion is meant to be expressive, not meant to help a person fit the current "beauty standard." "Own Pace" highlights this message through two powerful words.

The consumer reviews motivate me to continue my path of sustainability mixed with inspiration. Getting feedback about how a first grader feels empowered and "cool" in her new metallic biker jacket is why I create these unique pieces. That is just one customer who learned about sustainability at a young age and can go out into the world and spread that message. College apparel has been another avenue for BooRay. College students have tight budgets but are often obsessed with trends. I promote my designs as a gameday staple to replace an unsustainable option. Even if they continue to buy unethically for certain pieces, they are more aware of the issue and can spark a conversation about sustainability when wearing their piece from BooRay.

Since my pieces are unique, word-of-mouth marketing and visibility of the items make them gain popularity. I plan to build inventory in 2021 and expand BooRay Clo. into basics. This will allow me to produce more clothing, increase my customer base, and give many people access to local sustainable basics. As a college student, I have a unique platform to promote these pieces and spread the word about upcycled designs and their impact on the environment. This will help build awareness about sustainable apparel options and educate consumers.

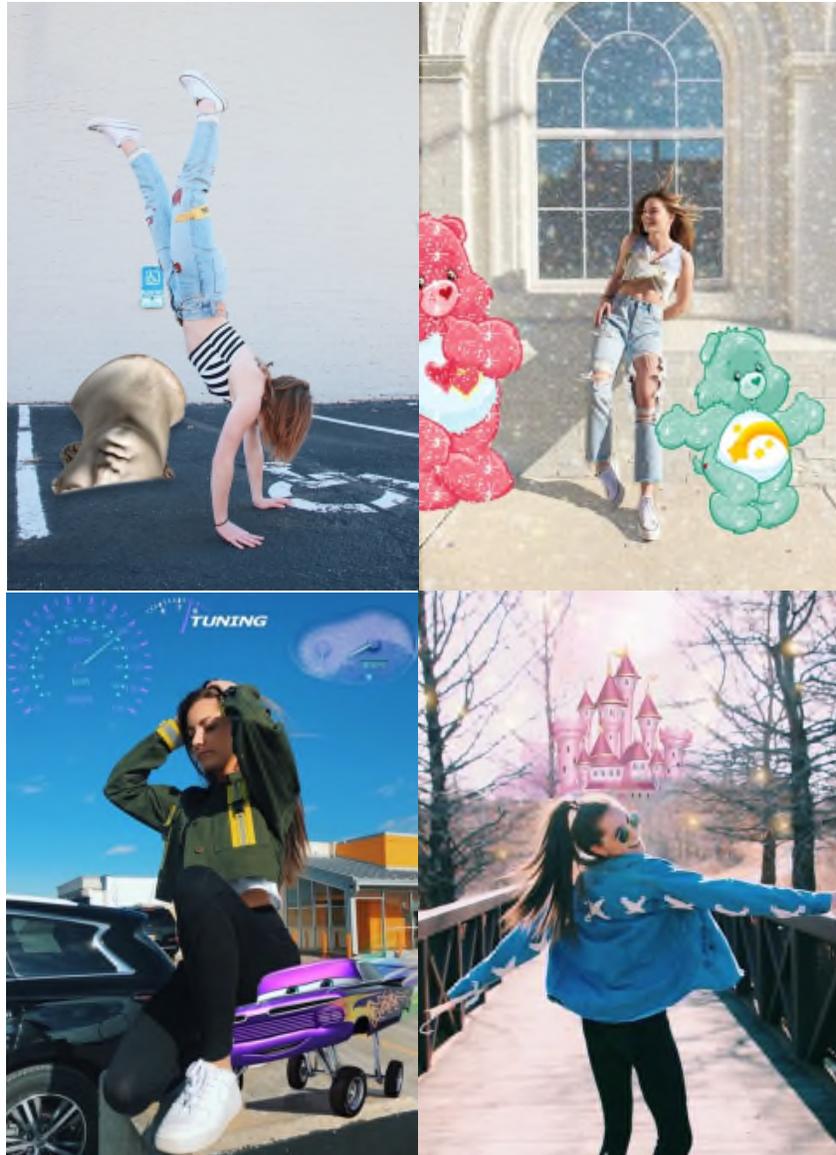
### **BooRay Clo. 's Collections**

BooRay Clo. has two collections. The original collection, "The Challenge Collection," and the new, "The Geanie Collection." Figure 3 showcases these new designs to demonstrate the range of personality and style in the new collection.



**Fig. 3** The Geanie Collection (Images are original photos taken by the author)

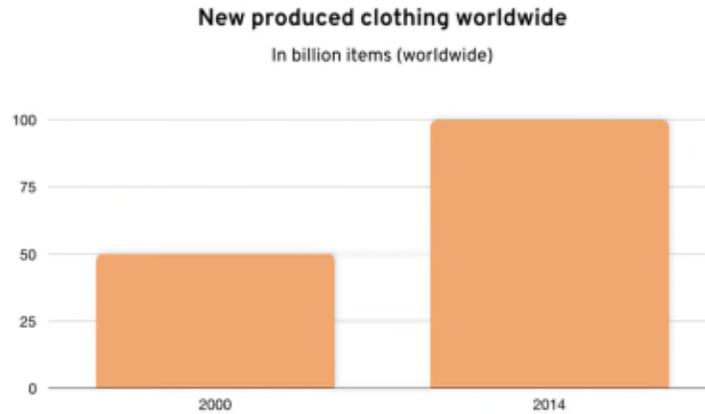
The name "Geanie Collection" is meant to be powerful, whimsical, and a play-off the word "genie." Genies originate from Arabic culture and are nothing like the Western depictions of the word. Genies are believed to appear similar to humans but possess amazing power that humans lack (see reference 4). I love the idea that a human can possess skills and gifts that no one else may initially see at first glance. This collection is a way of expressing individuality on the outside while remembering to build your inner talents to give to the world. This collection fits a range of unique styles, from streetwear to glam, from gameday to tomboy. I use social media platforms to promote the different energies behind each piece, using fun graphics to give highlight the piece's personality. This helps to show the consumer that the jean is more than just another pair of upcycled Levi's. See Figure 5 for examples.



**Fig. 5** The Geanie Collection Media (top 2) The Challenge Collection Media (bottom 2) (Images are original photos taken by the author)

**The Fight Begins**

When it comes to sustainable fashion, it is crucial to act now. Fast fashion continues to grow and does not appear to be slowing down. As a society, we need to ban together to buy sustainably and support ethical labor practices. Figure 6 shows how fast the fashion industry is growing due to fast fashion production. The faster the consumer turnover, the faster the cycle replenishes with new garments within the industry.



**Fig. 6** New Produced Clothing Worldwide

Over the past couple years, the cycle of fashion production has increased from every 6 months into a perpetual cycle. This is the direct cause for the increase in clothing production, as well as a sharp rise in clothing waste. As the idealization to keep up with trends/fads grows, so does the industry that supports it.

In conclusion, I am firmly committed to making a difference in the fashion industry by raising awareness about the importance of ethical, environmentally sustainable practices in the fashion industry. I believe that every step forward, no matter how small, will make a difference. For this reason, I will continue to use the brand I'm developing to educate consumers, create further understanding, and engage in fashion practices that are sustainable and environmentally responsible.

### References

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