

Handmade in the USA

Fashion handmade in America helps support local economies and creates American jobs while supporting hand crafted artistic expression. Have you ever considered whether this is the kind of production used to make your necklace or handbag?

OFFSHORING AMERICAN JOBS TO ENSURE CHEAP FASHION

Today, businesses in nearly every production industry are offshoring their work to developing countries where labor is cheap and environmental laws are lax. Big corporations, driven by the profit motive, do this in order to ensure their operational costs are as low as possible. Their primary concern is for their own bottom line; as a result little is done to protect American jobs. This means fewer jobs are kept here in the US, which is hurting our local economies and American families.

A QUICK HISTORY OF AMERICAN MANUFACTURING

Before the Second World War, clothing for American consumers was largely manufactured in small shops in America that followed a two-season production cycle. Each piece of clothing was custom-made to fit a particular individual and quality was the highest virtue. People did not have money to waste on apparel that would fall apart in less than a year – they purchased items that would sometimes last for decades and then handed them down to future generations going so far as to place clothing items and textiles in wills. Because raw materials were also in short supply, the fashion industry took great care to be as efficient with materials as they possibly could.

Following WWII, in light of higher demand for fashion from a richer American population, the manufacturing production processes used in the wartime uniform factories were applied to everyday fashion. There was also a de-emphasis on custom-made clothing. Inexpensive materials, such as nylon (cheaper than silk for pantyhose) and polyester (cheaper than cotton) also made it possible to produce more apparel at a lower cost.

Eventually, fashion houses took over production of their clothing, and as a result, chose to send production operations to other countries where labor costs were much less. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Today's Fast Fashion Industry – Not on American Shores

The transition from American made clothing to sweatshop fashion has shifted manufacturing to countries where labor costs are extremely low and there are no regulations in place for working conditions. This has stimulated a fashion cycle that reinforces a labor system that is inequitable, toxic, and in lots of cases inhumane. This has disempowered the global economy and disadvantaged people both here at home and abroad. The offshoring of American fashion jobs is a trend that just won't quit:

- **Percentage of American fashion produced offshore:** By 2007, 95% of all clothing purchased in the US was manufactured overseas. That's because labor is less expensive in

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places like Africa and Asia. As a result which means millions of jobs are shipped to other countries to keep fast fashion cheap.ⁱ

- **Lost American jobs in 2008:** This is not just a trend of the past – offshoring to fashion factories continues today. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics projected a drop from 198,400 apparel manufacturing jobs in the US in 2008 to 88,400 in 2018 (less than half).ⁱⁱ

By demanding cheap, fast fashion, consumers in the US have ultimately hurt their own country and their fellow Americans.

CONSUMERS DEMAND AMERICAN MADE FASHION IN A MORE ETHICAL INDUSTRY

Consumers have become aware of the offshoring problem, and many are choosing to support fashion created here at home. All Hearts Made in the USA fashion is created by artisans and laborers working in small businesses in America where they receive fair wages, work under safe conditions, and are afforded the benefits of being part of a developed economy. As an added bonus Hearts artisan are supported in their passions to create. It is the ultimate American dream to get paid do what you love and love what you do. By purchasing fashion that is handmade in America, consumers support a fashion making process that is more environmentally sustainable. Shopping locally minimizing energy usage, and the depletion in natural resources that is related to the extensive amount of shipping needed to move products around when they are made overseas. Handmade artistry results in clothing and accessories that stress quality and timelessness, and supports ethical production practices.

MADE IN AMERICA HELPS SUPPORT THE AMERICAN ECONOMY AND JOBS

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of purchasing handmade fashion made in America is that it helps boost the local economy. At the very least, by supporting made in America clothing and jewelry, consumers help keep more revenue from the sale of a garment or accessory within the US economy where local jobs are needed and where labor standards are more regulated and controlled.

The premiums consumers pay for handmade in America fashion helps support artisans and producers by covering the actual costs of production rather than artificially lowered costs at the expense of sweatshop workers.

Purchasing handmade in America fashion also keeps more revenue circulating within the greater American community. According to economic theory, money moves much faster when it's kept circulating within a smaller community. We have seen this reality play out with the value drop in our currency due to less circulation here at home. America is extremely rich in natural resources, and has so much ability to produce much of what we send overseas. Corporations take business opportunities abroad in order to escape environmental regulations and take advantage of employment opportunities where citizens have no choice but to work for near to nothing.

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Given that the money has a shorter distance to travel (metaphorically speaking) from one small business to another within the same geographic community, it can circulate at a faster rate. That's because local businesses are more likely to contract other local businesses – like printers, advertisers, service personnel, and supply companies – to keep their operations going. The result is that locally-produced (i.e. made in America) fashion speeds the circulation of currency to benefit even more people than it would if the fashion were produced elsewhere.

Take a look at how fashion made in America benefits our country

- Increasing your clothing spending by just 1% would create 200,000 American jobs in the manufacturing industry. Just think how many more jobs you'd create by purchasing all Made in America fashion?ⁱⁱⁱ
- Supporting American jobs doesn't have to cost a lot - if Americans spent just \$3.33 more on American-made products, they could generate 10,000 new jobs.^{iv}
- SustainU, which manufactures clothing for colleges and universities, has created 400 American textile jobs since it started in 2009. And that's marketing to a cash-strapped student audience!^v

It's clear that by supporting handmade in the USA fashion, consumers can use their purchasing power to benefit many lives. This kind of purchasing power is exactly what Hearts is all about.

Supporting Fashion that's Made Mindfully and Creatively

Fashion that's handmade in America not only supports the local economy and creates local jobs, it can also result in higher quality, longer-lasting apparel and jewelry. Handmade items are more often than not created using significantly higher attention to detail and quality, which means the pieces last a long time and wear very well.

Additionally, most handmade clothes and jewelry can also be custom-made. This affords the consumer the opportunity to specify preferences, such as fit, color, cut, and finish, resulting in higher consumer satisfaction. It also gets people away from the cookie-cutter style rut which is so prevalent in the mass-produced fast fashion industry. Handmade clothing allows fashionistas to create their own unique style that fits perfectly.

ETHICAL LIVING TIPS ON HOW TO SUPPORT HANDMADE IN AMERICA FASHION

1. **Turn over the label:** When shopping, always turn over labels or products to find out where they have been made. This extra step ensures you are aware of where your purchase is made. In supporting USA products and you can be confident that you're stimulating your country's economy, and helping provide sustainable work for someone within your own nation.

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2. **Buy locally made products:** Often times, products that are produced by local artisans are created within your own town or city. Not only does buying locally help reduce transport emissions, it's always a great way to support fair wages for local producers. Farmer's markets are often an excellent source for American made products.
3. **Look for recycled products:** Many recycled content products – from handmade papers to natural soaps – are created using waste products from your own community. Seek out these products as a way to support eco-friendly production and local jobs at the same time.

ⁱ *Ethical Style: What Happened to Made In the USA?* (2012, February 16). Retrieved April 2, 2012, from GOOD.is: <http://www.good.is/post/ethical-style-what-happened-to-made-in-the-usa/>

ⁱⁱ *Los Angeles firms bring apparel jobs home on cost concerns.* (2011, July 1). Retrieved April 2, 2012, from Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/01/us-usa-apparel-manufacturing-idUSTRE7602DT20110701>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Keeping It Local.* (2011, June 19). Retrieved April 2, 2012, from Las Angeles Times: <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jun/19/image/la-ig-diary-20110619>

^{iv} *Easy way for students to help the economic recovery: Buy American.* (2011, September 27). Retrieved April 2, 2012, from USA Today: <http://www.usatodayeducate.com/staging/index.php/campuslife/easy-way-for-students-to-help-the-economic-recovery-buy-american>

^v *Clothing Manufacturer Says the American Jobs Act "Will Change the Global Scope of Apparel Manufacturing".* (2011, October 11). Retrieved April 2, 2012, from The White House Blog: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/10/11/clothing-manufacturer-says-american-jobs-act-will-change-global-scope-apparel-manufa>