

Cultural and Cultural Appropriation Challenges of Indigenous People in the Global Fashion Industry



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1 Setting the Stage

The international fashion industry faces many challenges related to sustainable design, production, and distribution [8, 9]. This chapter suggests focusing on a cluster of these specific challenges found within the fashion industry, specifically the current and potential impact of the indigenous people population and culture [8, 11, 12] within the fashion industry.

The definition of fashion referred to in this chapter proposal defers to that of Coco Chanel: “Fashion does not only exist in dresses; fashion is in the air, it is brought in by the wind, one feels it coming, breathes it in, it is in the sky and on the pavement, it depends on ideas, customs and happenings” [9, 10].

In addition, for the purposes of this chapter, indigenous people reflect the United Nations definition to be: “Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live” [13, 25].

Additional foci look to the fashion industry to adopt the role as culture custodians, rather than deterrents engaging in such practices degrading indigenous people contributions to the fashion industry such as greenwashing, rather, impacting and adding great value to indigenous communities. The fashion industry has the power to unleash unlimited potential thus adding great value to the lives of indigenous people, through elevating the understanding and importance of culture [11, 12].

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At best and at the very least, the international fashion industry faces many challenges related to sustainable design, production, and distribution [8, 9]. There are indeed a cluster of these like challenges throughout the international fashion industry that spill over and affect indigenous people by the sheer nature of where the industry chooses to offshore. Here the explicit foci is driven by the global fashion industry, noting the past, current, and potential future impacts on the indigenous people population but not limited to Culture and Cultural Appropriation [11, 12].

The United Nations adaptation of what Indigenous people are characterized by may be noted as follows: “Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live” [13, 25]. This adaptation of Indigenous People is highly compatible with the essence of what culture is as they represent the long lineage of their peoples.

The United Nations adaptation is further supported by Hofstede as he embraces the essence of culture as defined by Kluckhohn to be, “Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired, and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 86, n. 5).

Inspired by Kluckhohn, Hofstede treats culture in his book *Cultures Consequences* as

“The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.” [11, 12].

A suitable conceptualization of culture is decisively crucial to the understanding of the true impact of usurping and attempts to weaken the indigenous peoples “cultural resilience [20, 22].” With centuries having experienced such things as oppressed language, dress, ability to create a firm sense of food and occupational securities, a firm understanding of culture is necessary to fully comprehend the potential damage colonial behaviors could, did, and may have in the future on countries they have colonized as the superior actor [20, 22].

It can be said that fashion is all consuming, exists in all cultures as all peoples need to be clothed. When one thinks about it, fashion is everywhere. It is in the bedroom, the workplace, the gala, and the hospital bed. Not to stop there. The act of fashion, construction et al of fashion involves water aquifers, rivers, forests to produce for example such textiles (arguably whether sustainable or not) viscose and rayon with deforestation implications, chemical waste and fast fashion excess credited with building new landfills around the world. Fashion is everywhere.

As far back as 1893 in an article, “What is Fashion” in a monthly review asks, just what is fashion? In the article is a quote, “But seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is?” [6] And the article goes forward. If the implications weren’t so poignant and so serious it would be hysterically amusing. It talks about a father who was distraught as he was now anticipating the New Year fashion trends, and he pleads for the trends to be a spin-off, elevation of the bonnet styles of the year before, so he didn’t have to go out now, purchase more for his daughter. The author goes on to discuss what in clothing is utility and what constitutes fashion. While we in this post-millennial era of fashion, must contend with the fallout from fast fashion, non-utilitarian fashion, it is not such a new concept, after all. We cannot however defend the indefensible where fashion cycles have gone from four seasons to weekly in many cases.

What then is fashion really? Looking to define fashion there may be indications to move forward and away from a more standard example as suggested by Kate Fletcher as simply, “Consumption, materialism, commercialization and marketing,” [22]. One may be better present and future served looking to Coco Chanel to a more organic, deconstructed view. Defining fashion here, refers to and defers to that of Coco Chanel: “Fashion does not only exist in dresses; fashion is in the air, it is brought in by the wind, one feels it coming, breathes it in, it is in the sky and on the pavement, it depends on ideas, customs and happenings” [9].

With the combination of culture and a deconstructed approach to what fashion is, the Indigenous communities remain exposed to the mostly self-regulated fashion industry. Fashion effects manufacturing, fossil fuels, shipping, waste in production and post-production, taxing ecosystems on land, air, and sea. In post-colonial affected countries where the production of cotton is involved is considered one of the dirtiest and thirstiest operations of plant-based textiles. The fashion industry lacks the engagement of such professionals as urban planners and urban architects where to date on a regular basis have un-noted relevance and should be elevated to as critical a status as a designer to the garments.

Cotton is a staple crop in many developing countries rich with indigenous populations. Something that will be discussed further in cultural appropriation here regarding cotton will intensify this current discussion.

Any cotton used without organic certification has been treated with pesticides, insecticides, and possibly uses genetically modified (GM) cotton seeds, “that are genetically engineered to produce a natural pest killer” [5], at the beginning of the growing process [10, 11]. More specifically, insecticides dominate traditional cotton production with “pyrethroids and organophosphates the most widely used [10, 11]. The World Health Organization classifies them as moderately hazardous. *However, those used in developing countries are classified as highly hazardous, generally acutely toxic nerve poisons that can contaminate groundwater*” [10, 11], p. 9). “Cotton “sold as organic in the US, doesn’t have to be certified organic as certification is market not label driven as complex non-universal organic labeling guidance creates markets of perceived value”. [21, 24], p. 1). An example of this confusion can be found in the use of traditionally grown cotton. Even though a fabric is labeled 100% cotton, the production of one t-shirt using traditionally grown (i.e., nonorganic) cotton, from farm to retail, uses 33% of a pound of insecticides (Organic

Trade Association, 2012) [19] and over 800 gallons of water in pre-and post-harvest [21], p. 1, National Geographic, 2010, para. 1) [15].

Looking further, serves to illuminate an immediate nexus surfacing, vis-à-vis motivating a brief discussion of anthropocentric and biocentric mindsets as Colonialism and post colonialism residue remains throughout the fashion industry today. This mindset is infused into centuries of fashion industry behaviors centered on the indigenous populations.

We can look to anthropocentric defined explicitly as the position that “considers man as the central fact or final aim of the universe and generally conceives of everything in the universe in terms of human values [27]. Further the literature contends that, “antanthropocentric, biocentrism is the position that human needs, goals, and desires should not be taken as privileged or overriding in considering the needs desires interests and goals of all members of all biological species taken together” [27].

From a modern perspective, looking to a more centrist ideological meeting of the minds suggests a compromise to be found somewhere in between, while there are dissimilar values between the anthropocentric and biocentric points of view, finding cooperation incorporating a balance between the two to be “more complimentary than competitive” [13]. Respect for the humans respect for the environment.

Further, it can and should be noted that the totalitarian anthropocentrism approach to building wealth continues to surface as the dominant force in the creation, support and maintenance of the fashion industry profits, albeit the bottom line. This is realized at the expense of one of the most precious resources in the ecosphere, our indigenous people populations and their priceless past, present, and future contributions to the world.

A wonderful example of just one of many, priceless eco-processes in-waiting, hoping to be extracted by the fashion industry from the indigenous populations can be found in Iceland. Iceland is a most amazing Island country located in the Northern Atlantic Ocean. Through necessity the Icelandic indigenous people used and created a process with what they had at their disposal from the ocean. The ocean provided a zero waste clothing and such things as jewelry and satchels from by-products of what they ate, sustainably suited, fish skin. It is demonstrated that fish skin leather has a far lower environmental impact than traditional tanned leathers [20, 22].

Further, history supports the tenacity of these indigenous cultural/fashion eco-architects. One of many great examples, the Icelandic indigenous people patently demonstrate sustainable success and fortitude. That even with “systemic colonization and repression of their language, culture, and fishing rights as well as dramatic changes in seafood [13] security could not thwart their ingenuity and contributions to the global sustainable fashion movement.

Notably, there is nothing fishy about the forthcoming detail. Dating back to the ninth century, the survival of the Icelandic indigenous people centered on the aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. More powerful national governments stepped in to regulate and restrict their own rights to then hunt and fish and worked to convert them to a more agrarian livelihood based on the invasive national culture and contrary to the life the Icelandic aboriginal people had ever known. This meant a coercion to give

up their relationship with the ocean. Iceland reaching to its indigenous roots, uses the skins of the wolffish in the luxury goods genre, to make shoes using tanning techniques from their ancestors. The wolfskin shoes [20, 22] serve as an exemplary model for the fashion industry to embrace. The indigenous tenacity, spirit, and brilliance of creating naturally sustainable processes are well served creating a sustainable fashion infrastructure created to endure. As they have been proven to do, generations and beyond. These processes are not part of mainstream fast fashion machines where the challenges are many here. Who will support teaching the future generations? Through serendipitous measures? Hardly a prescription for success. How do we envision the design for success then, building the infrastructure of support for like-minded measures in the fashion industry? “Action by-Design” where operations akin to the wolffish skin shoes become the mainstream rather than the exception.

Similarly, one looks to the rich in history, resources, talents et al of the African indigenous heritage. A heritage that forges continued paths to modern times despite the colonialism challenges it has faced. As a result, yet again, overcame and continues to overcome challenges with reinforced tenacity and vigor, virtues that aboriginal culture exudes.

Challenges to culture, also rich in history in Africa where colonialism laid centuries of efforts and in many cases successful efforts by stronger nations to abate the will of the indigenous people. A look to such reflections is captured in the literature where there is a voice of support for the usurping of the African culture. The concepts even found a voice in the Novel “*Things Fall Apart* [1].” There is a defense of the colonialism behavior crediting such things as religion, commerce, and English language development. It then also faults colonialism as native languages became a lost memory diluting the heritage and culture yet again of the African people.

While colonialism and post-colonialism paint a broad brush throughout all of Africa, there are significant cultural differences among the different individual countries. For example, Nigeria and South Africa where post-colonial behavior and effects are remarkably different. According to (Hofstede) [11, 12], there are six cultural dimensions. The dimensions are Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation and Indulgence. Each country is assigned different scores clearly demonstrating culturally, the differences among each.

The dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal. It expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us (Hofstede) [11, 12].

We find from further interest here, that in Africa both Nigeria and South Africa while they share the umbrella continent of Africa, score far differently in dimension number two, Individualism. Hofstede concurs that while Nigeria identifies as a collective culture where members of that society hold to their identity as a country as tied to their close relationships as a group, looking out for each other. South Africa identifies as an individualistic country, where according to Hofstede, culturally they are strongly inclined to care for themselves and their personal families as that is where their loyalty lies.

Translate this into fashion, however, and both countries are producing designers and clothing lines taking the global fashion industry by storm. Consider the mold

of cultural constraint broken remaining of course utterly rich with history. The new fashion stand of Africa overflows with brilliance of colors, design, patterns, indigenous sourced sustainable dyeing, beading, and all things certainly, African.

Demonstrated are both cultures from Nigeria and South Africa (a sampling of wonderful modern African fashion runway bound and, in the making) culturally and African grown. These designers are gifted up-and-coming designers in the global sphere of fashion who clearly, vibrantly, and independently provide the world with African and global influence in their designs, clothing and textiles. They deserve the world stage. The talented Fisayo Longe and Ugochi Iwuaba from Nigeria and up-and-coming sustainable textile and fashion designer from South Africa Sindiso Khumalo are on the forefront of bringing the voice of African fashion to the world stage.

It is one matter for African textile and fashion designers to create culturally inspired textiles and fashion based on their heritage, their culture, their birthrights. However, enter the world of cultural appropriation. While we have developed a rich dialogue here on Africa, let us continue then. One looks at the definition of cultural appropriation.

ervasive functioning definitions of cultural appropriation take center stage in a deep dive of the Bloomsbury analysis [23, 25]. They speak of the words “elusive” and “Freighted with ambiguity.” It they contest, it becomes is a conglomeration of events taking place not just in the final product displayed on the runway. It is about not merely being inspired by other cultures, it in addition is the “appropriation of labor in low wage regions, appropriation is ubiquitous and literally woven into the fabric of the fashion system”.

Further and perhaps more basic, “cultural appropriation is the taking of aesthetic or material elements from another culture by someone who is not a member of that culture without giving credit or profit. The taking is not unlike stealing or plagiarizing.” They go on to say that permission is not normally granted and many times especially in the fashion industry the appropriator profits from the theft and most often is typified by the whiff of colonial residue, it is done from a position of power. Indigenous people having their culture appropriated may well be the people that make the clothing at lower than living wages among other humiliating experiences in the production process where they are the underlings.

This discussion follows a natural path of progression in the fashion industry, following the powerful extracting profits from the weak. In a deep dive into two November 2020 articles, published only 2 days apart, both address Cultural Appropriation in the fashion industry exposing more layers of interest and concern.

Women’s Wear Daily headlines an article first, “How Cultural Appropriation Became a Hot-Button Issue for Fashion.” The dual authors, Blazio-Licorish and Anyanwu immediately reflect on their interview with Dr. Benedetti Morsiani (a research fellow at the University of Westminster in London in the department of Modern Languages and Cultures) who points to as examples as using current African inspiration to such designers ((however not limited to) as Jean Paul Gaultier, Donna Karan and Dolce & Gabbana [7]).

Women’s Wear Daily sees the power and the financials of these design dynasties far outweigh that of culturally born African designers who are likely as or more

talented, receive “far less impact and attention and representation of their own”. The design dynasties capitalizing on the profit end, are disproportionate to the actual Africans lack of benefit who serve as the key monetized cultural inspiration.

To continue, the summation of the critical path of fashion appropriation succinctly relies based on a quote again from Dr. Benedetta Morsiani, that cultural appropriation is “a phenomenon now mainly referring to the exploitation of marginalized cultures by more dominant mainstream cultures [7].”

Dr. Morsiani goes on to note encouraging detail regarding the younger generation being, “more aware and vocal about cultural appropriation due to the cultural diversity in metropolises, and their awareness of the lack of representation for specific groups” [7].

The second of the two articles authored by Miles Socha, *Fashion Has Found Beauty in Other Cultures for Centuries-but Has It Given Due Credit?* In it he shares that there is a welcome “sea of change” enroute as “borrowing of material culture, particularly from disenfranchised parts of the world” is now under far more public scrutiny and vigorous discussion [24, 28].

But to what extent has the phenomenon of cultural appropriation been accepted by the fashion enriched, rich, and famous. Now coming under greater scrutiny? A good place to begin as an example and a prologue to this continued discovery, one looks to the year 2010. September and December 2010 published articles chronicles the five-year anniversary of Irish singer and wife duo, Bono and Ali Hewson’s ‘Edun’ their African fashion safari. The digression begins.

As fashion and design houses go, there is a gravitational pull from all over the world to Africa as precisely supported by Dr. Morsiani of University of Westminster. The extent to which the African culture is represented is manipulated under the guise of extractive economic enterprising fashion houses time and again in the fashion industry. When Bono and his wife Ali Hewson began their clothing line Edun; it was to be all about Africa and empowering the people. In 2005 as a matter of public record, Edun was all in for Africa. The premise was the clothing line would gather and produce mainly in Africa, by Africans and sourced in Africa. The accolades and hopefully profits would be far-reaching for the Irish business partners.

LVMH (as in luxury brands Louis Vuitton and Moët) also became part of the ownership.

Ensuing, the famous Advertisement in September 2010 where Bono and Hewson were dressed in Edun and sporting Louis Vuitton fell flat. The key to the ad was, “Every journey begins in Africa” [4]. Where were the Africans.

As the Christian Science Monitor put it, “Removing Africans out of the scene, out of the image of the ‘natural’ African landscape is an old trope in the exploitation of the image and a reality of Africa” (Windborne, 2010) [28] Being exploited of course. Where were the clothes produced? As history would have it, likely China. At one point they were producing 85% of their line in China and were, as a matter of public record, called to task during a New York Fashion Week event. While it sent shock waves through the sustainable fashion circle of trust, however, this was Bono. This was Louis Vuitton. This was going to be fine.

And so, it was. They went on to Africa-explain, all the way to 2013 with a new partner, Diesel. Enter Paris fashion week, enter Edun, enter the African

thematic/dramatic/folly. According to the Observer New Review in a Hewson interview by Sean O'Hagan. Hewson, while producing in China under the guise of all things African, was quoted as saying, "In the next 20 years, Africa is going to blow our minds". She talked about the cotton in Uganda, Kenya, Tunisia, Morocco, Madagascar. Sound-bytes associated with Africa that sells. No human connection to the Africans behind the label, however there was a French connection, Louis Vuitton and an Italian connection, Diesel [17, 18].

One remaining exploitive fact would be, that in the advertisement featuring the Edun duo departing a perfectly tailored private plane, in a Pristine African field, with no Africans. There was a tiny disclaimer, "Profits from the bag, (Louis Vuitton-not Edun bag) as well as Bono's fee to benefit the conservation Cotton Initiative Uganda and his own Edun line of clothing, which he markets as garments and jewelry, made in Africa with African materials." Classic. Then, how much of a percentage? And the cultural appropriation, post-colonial fashion industry behavior continues. Who really profits?

As a follow-up in 2018, LVMH makers of Louis Vuitton, Moet-Hennessey among other luxury brands, pulled out of their partnership with Bono, Hewson, and their Edun. Edun closed their US operations and the sole brick and mortar store in New York City [14, 16].

Cultural appropriation works best when the aggressor comes from a position of strength as to securely dominate the weaker, culture usurped.

In the book, *Who Owns Culture? Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law*," and author, Susan Scafidi, a Law Professor at Fordham University in New York City confides that it is a difficult task to explain the concept of cultural appropriation. She cites one example, that in the United States cultural appropriation, "almost always involves members of the dominant culture borrowing from the cultures of minority groups" [16]. It is clear the same can be said regarding colonialism efforts of stronger European countries such as China, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Germany et al in Africa [16, 17].

Edun was never able to get a firm profitable hold with the Africa inspired clothing line. Perhaps one of the reasons is that they saw the vulnerability of Africa to share without permission. It has all appearances that they took the majesty of Africa, of the use of the people and the geography as window dressing for the Luxury brand. They used Africa to elevate this luxury brand and did nothing to elevate Africa.

"People Think We All Live in A Zoo"—Exclaims Princess Senamile Masango of the Zulu Nation.

Perhaps the missing link here, was their inability to understand that Africa is now post-colonial and Africans, well in the words of a South African Princess Senamile Masango, "People think we all live in a zoo." To the global fashion industry, prepare to begin a newfound understanding of real Africa and real Africans.

Introduced here is South African Millennial extraordinaire, African Princess of the Zulu Nation, Nuclear Physicist, Fashionista. This is someone Bono, Ali Hewson, LVMH should meet in the way of discovery. To discover there is more to modern Africa than serving as a backdrop to enrich themselves, their brands.

And to this, a real South African woman as introduced by the following interview detail:

I had the great honor to spend some time interviewing Princess Senamile. Just an amazing African woman, just an amazing human being. And just ask her as she offers in her own words that, no she does not live in a zoo. She has never even seen a lion in the wild but does confess to seeing an elephant and a giraffe. Her journey through life as a South African has been a blessing to Africa and internationally as well and without the props. She loves fashion, both modern and traditional when culture calls.

THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN PRINCESS

FASHION INDUSTRY TAKE NOTE

SHE DOES NOT LIVE IN A ZOO

Princess Senamile Masango is a Princess by birth, from the Zulu Royal household.

Princess Senamile is a young South African Nuclear Physicist. She also heads the Senile Masango Foundation which also hosts for women, WISE ... Women In Science & Engineering.

In a brief interview we discussed African culture. She notes that in South Africa, the native language is now not passed onto the future generations. That there is very little history taught and a lack of museums chronicling the rich history there. Fashion there is more individualistic, following the terms of the [11, 12] analyses where in Nigeria where they are more community oriented, they are more apt to wear traditional textiles and clothing there. She loves modern dress, although very respectful of traditional dress when there are cultural events. As a member of the Zulu royal family, the chosen garments are of Cheetah, not cotton or silk. When there is an event, and it does not require the royal Cheetah, she sources the organic fabric and has someone she knows, cut, sew, and fit.

She is the first African woman to be part of the African led experiment at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research), one of the world's largest and most respected centers for scientific research. Princess Senamile is Founder and Chair of Women in Science and Engineering in Africa, Non-executive at NECSA and Chairperson of the Research and Development Subcommittee at NECSA. She is one of the youngest Board Members to be appointed at a schedule 2 state-owned enterprise (SOE), Council Member at the University of the Western Cape and Board member at Moses Kotane Institute.

Princess Senamile was raised in a village called KwaNongoma a deep rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. She has become one of South Africa's very few black female nuclear physicists. She earned and was awarded a BSc (Physics and Electronics), and BSc (With Honor) in Nuclear Physics from the University of Zululand. In addition, she earned a Diploma in Project Management from Varsity College; MSc in Nuclear Physics (Cum Laude) from the University of Western Cape and Postgraduate Diploma in Energy Leadership from Wits Business school. She was a PhD candidate in Nuclear Physics at the University of Western Cape.

Her commitment to African youth, puts her as South Africa's Research Leader at BRICS youth energy outlook. She established the Senamile Masango Foundation as

an NGO encouraging women to engage one another about social issues that affect them as well as plans to create a mobile science lab to travel to villages teaching STEM. She was also named one of the top 50 Global inspirational women of 2020.

In addition, she addressed the South African President, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, the late King His Majesty King Goodwill Zulu (her uncle), and the former President Jacob Zuma.

She has shared platforms with internationally renowned figures such Naomi Campbell; Dr Nkosazane Dhlamini Zuma: former AU Chairperson, currently Minister of COGTA; Former President of Ghana, John Maharnan and more.

She was invited to be part of the Second Eurasian Women's Forum 2018 in Russia. The Eurasian Women's Forum is the world's biggest influential platform for discussing the role of women in-contemporary society. She was invited to FEMROOT hosted by United Nations 75th General Assembly, the aim of the event was to highlight the importance of having females in STEM from an African perspective. Senamile is a frequent guest on African multimedia from print, television to radio and Podcasts and recently was invited to personally meet with the USA Secretary of State Anthony Blinken.

African women empowerment remains a large segment of her platform encouraging post graduate study to all South African women with a great desire to make "Education fashionable in her lifetime." The fashion industry should clearly take notice as beginnings are never too late. Fashion would be far better served beginning with respect not usurping of indigenous people as the look forward now, is to Northern Nigeria.

Moving forward now to the Indigo dying pits of Kano, Nigeria. Part of the cluster of challenges addressed is the current existence of post colonialism in developing countries, continuing with a discussion of post-colonial events taking place in Nigeria specifically the Northern Nigeria region.

Original indigo dye pits can be dated as far back as 1498. Kano has been known for its natural dying pits of indigo where indigenous people have carried on the indigo dying traditions with the use of no chemicals.

While there is ongoing discussion whether the Indigo was introduced to Northern Nigeria by India remains unresolved. However, "indigo dyed hand-woven strips and garments were found in Egyptian tombs during the period of the Pharos. Thus, an indication that the indigo plant was present in Africa, even though it may have not been specifically cultivated for dying at the time as far back as 1498. It was concluded that this evidence refuted the usual contention that the indigo plant was introduced to Africa in the nineteenth to seventeenth century by India [2].

It is no secret what has been happening to the indigenous clothing and textile population in Kano. After centuries of organic, sustainable contributions to the world of the indigo and unique patterns and weaving techniques the China post-colonial era is now on point to extinguish the legacy. This is not only an industry being decimated, but also centuries and generations of knowledge and expertise shared through families. The dominant controlling the lives and livelihoods of the weak [3].

According to the BBC, the urbanization and colonial policies are said to transform the Kano economy. However, with such things as a rise in cheaply producing foreign factories vs local designers and dyers (organic), the industry is turning over to new,

cheap, low-quality imitations. It is this imitation industry that is consuming and eliminating the indigenous families, workers, and livelihoods. It doesn't pay to train family members anymore as the businesses are not turning profits.

In an important, July 2022, interview, author, China foreign policy expert and contributor to the Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, (United States Congress) Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, "China in Africa: The New Colonialism?" Mr. Gordon G. Chang shares insights here. The study, while comprehensive, concurs that, "While a number of African nations have welcomed Chinese engagement and investment, it often comes at a very high cost, with a focus on extractive economies," as clearly evidenced in Kano.

We discussed the Kano, Nigeria scenario where the Chinese have completely dismantled the city in the indigenous population's centuries old organic textile and clothing industry. Kano is world-famous for its rich organic indigo dyes, weaving and textile printing. In addition, the indigo dying pits tracing back to the sixteenth century and likely longer, no longer have significance to the area. The Kano artisans as part of the Chinese post-colonial behavior have reduced the organic indigenous industry to now creating tech packs, where the merchants send their African designs to be made in China and they in turn must buy them from China to sell in Nigeria as authentic, however not, so they are faux.

Mr. Chang notes that Chinese ruler Xi Jinping views the world through a Han nationalist lens, seeing other peoples as inferior. Xi believes he has a right to rule tianxia or "all under Heaven." All others, in his view, must obey him.

Mr. Chang states, "China's relations with Africa have, in many ways, devastated local industry there. Beijing incessantly talks about 'win-win' cooperation,' but the Chinese view the continent in colonial terms." Mr. Chang goes on to clarify that Xi Jinping views relations with Africa as more than "neo-colonial." "Colonialist" would be an accurate term for his approach to the continent. Clearly an ominous and clear indication of the Chinese impact on not only the fashion industry, however specifically, the African textile and fashion industry and indigenous people stagnation.

In September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly voted to establish and adopt the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. "The Declaration recognizes that indigenous peoples have important collective human rights in a multitude of areas, including self-determination, spirituality, lands, territories, and natural resources [26].

In addition, the United Nations recently, in the past few years, created the Alliance for Sustainable Fashion. It has such immense potential to coordinate with the fashion industry to create nuclei around the world elevating the indigenous fashion and textile industry. Currently, there are no people on the alliance with a strong fashion background to develop a proper critical understanding of the unlimited potential of good it potentially can serve to engage.

It also sets out minimum standards for the determination of spirituality, lands, territories, and natural resources. It can be noted that this may be a sound beginning toward indigenous peoples afforded protections however time is of the essence. As evidenced in Iceland and Africa as well as the colonialist business models rampant

almost standard in the fashion industry more must be done. How to get beyond minimum standards?

The United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion is another sound beginning and should begin a more rigorous coordination with any relevant United Nations group. The issue, at hand here, is that the people involved with the newly formed United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion have very little knowledge of fashion, true fashion as treated here. The fashion supply chains do not merely consist of shipping containers and durable packaging; it is about the communities where the fashion industry does business. It is about urban planners, urban architects, waste disposal, soil scientists, water, and land management.

Fashion is about the community where the fashion industry does business.

In Mumbai, en route to the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research where I am an advisory board member, I noted the roads on the way from the Airport were in utter disrepair, some barely navigable. How much money does the fashion industry extract from the indigenous efforts of India? Trillions. The impetus exists creating the need to empower the indigenous communities impacted by the fashion industry to restore, revitalize and renew.

The demands need to shift in favor of the weak. We see Princess Senamile a crown jewel of Africa. Let there be more. We need to dismiss the power of the fashion industry to dominate in pursuit of profit, in lieu of recognizing the power to uplift.

The fashion industry will be well served to adopt the role as culture custodians, rather than deterrents engaging in such practices degrading indigenous people contributions to the fashion industry such as greenwashing. Using the casual zebra and lion to make the sale, it is well served to keep the Louis Vuitton out of the faux safari. They can do better, luxury fashion can do better, and the fashion industry can do better. The fashion industry has the power to unleash unlimited potential in the communities where they do business, thus adding great value to the lives of indigenous people, through elevating the understanding and importance of culture [11, 12]. Let them lead the way to sustainable innovation.

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