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2030: Black Textiles Become Illegal.

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The process to create the rich black colour in textiles, hidden behind its popularity, led to the colours demise as negating its use for garment production reduced toxic wastewater production significantly. The colour black, specifically in the context of textiles and garment production is deeply ingrained in human history and society. Black textiles have cut illusions across bodies added to elegant designs creating mystery and have become the ultimate fashion piece. For centuries, the wardrobes of society have been filled with black; for work, for grief, for religious dress and for a social night out, it is one of the most common colours behind our wardrobe doors.

Modern controversy and popularity surrounding black has been fuelled by the recent discovery of, ‘the blackest black’ pigment, “Vantablack,” being exclusively licensed by the artist Anish Kapoor meaning anyone caught using the pigment would be infringing on the rights of the artist. Even from 1581, the production of black textiles were controversial, with England banning the import of logwood from Mexico, only to remove the ban 80 years later in recognition of the superior quality of the process and resulting black colour from its pigment. The rich black textiles that can evoke a mysterious feeling within us while worn or seen, also result from one of the leading processes which makes the fashion industry one of the top polluting industries on our planet. The difficulty of producing true black textiles means that black may contribute disproportionately to the overall pollution produced by the textile dyeing industry. The demand and competition for deeper black textiles has led to multiple processes, chemicals, excessive water usage and waste that exceeds natural dyes and lighter colours. The textile industry relying on outdated practices to answer the demand of fast fashion, inadvertently made an unagile system. The present introduction of newer air dyeing processes for polyester textiles which significantly reduces water waste has proven the inability of the industry to evolve towards sustainable practices. The continued rapid pace of the textile industry will require dramatic measures in order to sustain human and environmental life, such as the ban of the production of black textiles.

Such a drastic measure, as globally banning black textile production, is a provocation meant to start a broader discussion on what future garments will look like if society takes the textile industry’s environmental issues seriously. It would be almost impossible to imagine a reality where a black garment were illegal, especially since the author of this paper is guilty of preferring black garments, but this paper argues that such an outcome is conceivable given the shifting attitudes towards the fashion industry and the associated textile dyeing processes employed. Still, that which is banned also produces a certain demand. Will 2030 be a time when second hand black garments will be sought after by collectors and contraband black garments are seen in the underground societies of our civilization?