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The Sewing Rebellion: Frau Fiber's practice of service and skill sharing

The Sewing Rebellion is a service, social capital and making movement, engaging in a practice of slow, durational, careful listening, problem solving, and skill sharing. The Sewing Rebellion builds community through hands-on experiences that attempt to instigate change of apparel consumption.

In 2006, I developed an alter ego named Frau Fiber. Frau Fiber is a former East German textile worker, turned international activist super hero, who advocates for: Fast Fashion textile and apparel production transparency; honoring the labor behind the label; emancipation from consumption through textile and apparel skill sharing and crafting of one of a kind garments; and she asks the public to exchange their leisure time for personal crafting of textiles and apparel.

Her legacy project is the SEWING REBELLION a national campaign to "STOP SHOPPING AND START SEWING!" The SEWING REBELLION uses skill-sharing in the service of empowerment, community building, and advocating for economic and social change. The SEWING REBELLION connects participants to the history of thrift and reuse circles, and quilting bees, where participants come together to pool and share resources, talk politics and promote change of the Fast Fashion industry. The SEWING REBELLION has multiple pop up sites nationwide. Active circles are hosted at the LGBTQ Centers and Homeless Shelters in Long Beach, CA; artist run spaces in Los Angeles, Maker spaces in Asheville NC and a Public Library in Boulder, CO.

The SEWING REBELLION is Free and open to all, it does not discriminate and serves ethnically, economically, age, and gender diverse people from coast to coast, who are looking for a sustainable, economical solution to fast fashion. Frau Fiber has maintained a blog archive of the participants who have gained basic sewing, mending, altering and making skills. Some participants have only attended one event, which met their needs, while others have been attending for years, and bring new projects each time. Participants have learned how to operate machines they have had for years but never used. They have mended huge piles of denim jeans, they have found their creative voice in creating an embroidered patch to repair a garment, and some have even started business that implement sewing because they gained new skills and confidence at the SEWING REBELLION.

Since the founding of the SEWING REBELLION there has been a shift in the consumer consciousness, people are concerned with where their clothing is coming from, and what kind of alternatives do they have to Fast Fashion. Thrifting coupled with distribution of sewing knowledge, through THE SEWING REBELLION is one alternative, that also encourages people to come together as a community, and work and problem solve together. Creating a diverse social space where many different types of people come together for one cause. After ten years of ground work Frau Fiber and the SEWING REBELLION has created an atmosphere where people are ready for the STOP SHOPPING START SEWING message to take hold. One example of this is how Libraries are creating maker's spaces, and besides 3-D printers they also have sewing machines.