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WHAT'S INSIDE

**A FEATURED ARTICLE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

THE CALL TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By Farah Theodore
Dominican Environmentalist



Ms. Theodore recently published this article in the Sun News paper and is a usual in the paper's writer's column.

Abaca Trees

For decades the call to create a sustainable future has highlighted the need for 'transformative' even 'evolutionary' changes to the 'status quo' of our socioeconomic actuality. It seems much more convenient to label 2020 as a horrible year rather than face up to a harsh reality that demands our attention, and implores us to consider lifestyle, economic and policy changes that can only mitigate the further fallout of neoclassical economics as well as enable us to adapt to a safer and healthier future.

It is sensible to see the opportunity in every situation even negative ones. 2019 was a year when many countries were finally taking the need to 'ban' plastics seriously (at least on paper) leaving environmentalists feeling a bit of optimism only to be undermined by the 2020 proliferated use of disposable masks exacerbating existing pollution challenges. Nature as always provides solutions if only we think outside the lie of synthetics. One viable alternative to the nightmare of N-95 masks is abaca fiber. The fiber obtained from the trunk of the abaca tree - which is a banana tree species - has a practical history in Asia being used for 19th century manila envelopes, salt-resistant ship ropes, and up to 30% Japanese banknotes. Moreover it is claimed to be as durable as polyester and will decompose within two months.

In a recent article by Andreo Calonzo in Bloomberg Green (Bloomberg.com):
'a preliminary study by the Philippine Department of Science and Technology showed abaca paper to be more water resistant than a commercial N-95 mask, and to have pore sizes within the US Centres for Disease Control and Preventions recommended range to filter hazardous particles'.

Neil Francis Rafisura general manager of Salay Handmade Products Industries Inc. said,
'There are people who will pay a premium for environmentally friendly products'. Good to know when projected sales of disposable face masks illustrate a rise of more than 200-fold worldwide this year to \$166 billion.

It is refreshing the level of innovation sparked by the surge of environmental awareness. None is as out-of-the-box like Bob Hendriks's living coffin design made from mushroom mycelium. The TU Delft (Delft University of Technology, Netherlands) researcher and founder of loop, Hendriks stated, 'the living cocoon enables people to become one with nature again and to enrich the soil instead of polluting it'. It sure adds value to the concept of dust to dust. The living cocoon is 100% natural, can be grown in seven days with only local materials without the use of artificial light or electricity, and removes toxic substances by helping the body 'compost' more efficiently which is facilitated by the soft bed of moss inside the coffin. This concept is welcomed by Frank Franse, director of two funeral homes when he said, 'we think it is important to be involved in sustainable innovation like this'. It's worth noting as well that 'mycelium was used in Chernobyl, is utilized in Rotterdam to clean up soil, and some farmers also apply to make the land healthy again' - Hendriks.

Many agree that love is a verb. Hence, claiming to love nature means nothing if actions and behavioral patterns say otherwise. Everyone has to up their game when it comes to being responsible for the environment and management of natural resources suggested that we should not just think outside the box but rather just outside was on to something. Our solutions are in nature and naturally better than any alternative. Who'd think that mushrooms would be so versatile that its uses are considered unlimited from: building materials, textiles, food, water filtration, antibiotic properties, bio-fuel, packaging materials, and ability to aid in curing diseases among others.

As much as the year 2020 can be referred to as annus horribilis, Caribbean leadership has to conjure up ingenuity to diversify from the dependency on tourism. The current global pandemic presents a great opportunity to grab the bull by the horns and shape the destiny of the region to the benefit and empowerment of its people.

One of the fundamental aspects of sustainability is the ability to hold each other accountable particularly corporations, institutions and governing bodies. We ought to look to territories, like those in Southeast Asia, where the similarities in tropical plants and diversity of uses (e.g. coconut) can help us truly be an example of how small island nations can find their niche and show the world the beauty of natural conscious living.

Sir Winston Churchill said it best:

"A politician needs the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen".

