**What is Upcycling?**

*Provided By Ecothot LLC*

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Upcycling is commonly mistaken as a craft. Upcycling is an art and science which requires patience, methods, trials and errors, and true imagination and creativity.

In 2018, I realized my lifelong gadgets and tools for everyday living were the science and art of upcycling.

Growing up more disadvantaged in the west side of Cleveland, I had to make do with anything I could find. Since my youth, I was exposed to science and art through programs that allowed me to be creative, practical, and resourceful. Utilizing any free gifts or street find became a natural part of my everyday living and my parent's frustration with "trash" in our home.

From turning tire wheels into raised garden beds to using street beer bottles from Cleveland's neighborhoods for flower vases, I was always attempting to enhance the quality of my life. Some may wonder how upcycling improve your life quality but as an old saying "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

To understand the meaning of upcycling, there is one misconception in black culture that I would like to clarify: to educate black people on upcycling. Since the digital age is expanding and social media and infographics are becoming more common, digital communications are missing huge links to culture.

For example, black and brown communities have always upcycled. Being from backgrounds in which our roots are connected to struggle and generational misrepresentation in media, we have always found creative ways to utilize our resources beyond the intended purpose.

There are many household traditions and upcycling habits. Whether it be from an old cookie tin now serving as button and pin storage. Or turning old fabrics into quilts that can be passed down generationally. Or commonly turning old containers from purchased meals into food storage. Lastly, to even some of my new styles of upcycling, which includes turning beer and wine bottles into organic beeswax aromatherapy or lasting and sustainable home decor.

As an upcycle scientist, I recognize there is a gap in upcycling between where different backgrounds meet. This gap is primarily due to media showing up cycling as an expensive art form or high fashion brand when, upcycling can be both. For communities to truly collaborate and coexist, recognizing different cultural definitions for the term upcycling is needed. There is a lack of accepting what can be upcycled which can hinder the progress towards a more sustainable future.