

Honorable Council Members,

Throughout my career—as chair of fashion design at Parsons, creative director at Liz Claiborne, and host of *Project Runway*—I have advocated against fur.

The fashion business has a troubling history with animals, but it is quickly evolving. Believe it or not, furriers used to slice up chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, leopards, baby seals, and tigers for their fur. Most of that was declared illegal in the 1970s when the federal government enacted the [Marine Mammal Protection Act](#) and the [Endangered Species Act](#). Now, it's time to safeguard all the other animals from such gratuitous violence by supporting City Council Speaker Corey Johnson's bill to ban fur sales in New York City, as lawmakers have already done in [Los Angeles](#) and [San Francisco](#).

There isn't much to be happy about in politics today, but this trend toward kindness should give everyone hope. At Parsons, the fur trade enjoyed years of unchallenged promotion in which it enticed budding designers to work with fur by offering them free fur, trips to Scandinavia, and sponsorship deals. I introduced a program in which PETA was given equal time to screen videos showing what happens to animals on fur farms around the world before their pelts end up in New York showrooms. [Foxes, rabbits, chinchillas, and even dogs and cats](#) are anally electrocuted, gassed, bludgeoned, and often skinned alive.

Student interest in the fur program dried up as quickly as enthusiasm for sustainable design increased. Consumer demand for fur has plummeted. According to the treasurer of [Greater Fur New York](#), just 14 retail storefronts selling fur remained in the garment district in 2018—down from 450 in 1977. This year, there are even fewer.

Fashion has evolved. Designers are finding it increasingly easy to be creative without being destructive. Hundreds of fabrics have been developed that are more eco-friendly and animal-friendly. When my *Project Runway* cohort Michael Kors banished fur from his collections, he [said](#), "We now have the ability to create a luxe aesthetic using non-animal fur." Donatella Versace [declared](#), "Fur? I am out of that. I don't want to kill animals to make fashion. It doesn't feel right." Gucci CEO Marco Bizzarri [announced](#), "Technology is now available that means you don't need to use fur. The alternatives are luxurious. There is just no need." Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Armani, and Chanel have enacted [fur-free policies](#), as have dozens of mass-market brands like H&M, Zara, Gap, Nine West, and The North Face.

Furthermore, the proposed ban would fit in with the city's many green initiatives. Fur production requires dangerous chemicals that pollute the environment. To keep animal pelts from putrefying, furriers steep them in pools of noxious chemicals like chromium and formaldehyde. The EPA has fined fur-processing plants for improper disposal of these poisons. A ban on fur sales would boost the burgeoning market for new, greener materials that don't harm the environment.

Let's all embrace fabrics that don't bleed and support Speaker Johnson's bill to ban fur.