

## **2 Blankets + Scissors + Thread= Hoodie.**

**By Kat Eftink. 12/2/2023**

Within 30 minutes, two second-hand blankets were transformed into a new hoodie.

One blanket was a child-sized Hello Kitty fleece blanket. The other was a tapestry blanket with images of flowers, birds, and butterflies in bright purples, greens, and yellows.

They were cut and sewn together creating a one-of-a-kind hoodie.

“It’s just wearable art,” Kelvin Johnson said. “I want the piece to start a conversation.”

Kelvin Johnson, 26, is the CEO and designer of his fashion brand called, “Cop What You Want.” It means get what you want. He does custom and original designs. Johnson creates clothing and accessories, mainly using thrifted materials like blankets.

Johnson’s thriftiness started when he was just a kid.

When Johnson was a kid, his mother, Deeric Michelle Hawkins, bought him clothes at thrift stores. Johnson picked the pants he wanted, and his mother took them to an alteration shop. It’s not that Hawkins wouldn’t buy him new clothes, but she couldn’t.

“I grew up to learn to love the thrift,” Johnson said.

He proudly wore his altered second-hand clothes to school, even though he was worried someone might judge him for it.

“He’s very successful because he doesn’t lose focus,” his mother said. “He doesn’t allow distraction to hinder his goal-oriented mindset.”

Johnson’s goal after graduating high school as the salutatorian was to become a neuroscience doctor. He had a full ride to the University of Tennessee.

It didn't go well. Being in college was the first time Johnson was away from his family. His mother took care of him in high school when Johnson was first diagnosed with [Crohn's disease](#). She watched what he ate. But once he moved away to college and had freedom to eat anything he wanted, he lost control. He took advantage of his \$300 freshman food card.

"I would go and get some Panda Express, super greasy, with the sweet chili sauce, just free," Johnson said. "I was free."

That freedom didn't last long. The greasy Panda Express didn't agree with his Crohn's disease. He was hospitalized for two weeks, and home on bedrest for another two weeks. He fell behind in school

UT's neuroscience degree was a strict five-year program. His instructor told him he couldn't catch up, so he switched to an exploratory track and eventually found his way into business economics.

While Johnson was studying business economics, he was still making trips to the alteration store. He brought his thrifted clothes and cut out patches. He'd lay out his ideas, and the employees of the alteration store would take pictures and sew his designs.

Johnson was always at the thrift stores. He never went to any parties and wasn't involved in any extracurricular activities. Still, he drew attention.

"People barely saw me," he said. "But I was cool, like, whenever you saw me, I had on cool clothes."

His passion for clothing and design soon overwhelmed his interest in business economics.

Johnson was two classes away from graduating from UT, but the school gave him an extra \$5,000. They demanded that he pay them back. He refused, dropped out, and had his family's support. He knew it happened for a reason.

His sister, Akesha Dixon, said she was happy for him.

“Whenever you have a passion, you must follow your heart,” Dixon said. “It’s the only way to success.”

Johnson followed his heart. He started painting designs on clothing and continued to make designs through the alteration shop. Then, he realized he could do what the alteration employees were doing.

So he did. He taught himself how to sew. How to use the machine. How to run a business. How to be successful.

Now, it takes Johnson 30 minutes to transform two blankets into one hoodie.

He grabbed the Hello Kitty fleece blanket and the tapestry blanket.

He flattened the blankets on the floor and used an old hoodie for the pattern. He cut the old hoodie in sections separating the sleeves and the hood from the body of the hoodie.

The Hello Kitty blanket will be the front panel. He put the body of the old hoodie on top and cut.

The tapestry blanket will be the back panel. He put the body of the old hoodie on top and cut.

He placed the old hoodie’s sleeve on the tapestry blanket and cut.

He placed the old hoodie’s hood on the tapestry blanket and cut.

He went to his sewing machine and sewed together the hoodie working inside out. He sewed the front and back together. He sewed on the sleeves. Then he flipped the hoodie right side out, and he sewed the hood on. He didn’t pin his pieces together—it wasn’t necessary or efficient.

Once the hoodie was completed, he shook it. All the loose threads fell off. He attached his tag and painted his logo on the tag. Done.

“Cop what you want,” Johnson said. “It’s custom so it’s like literally get what you want.”

