

Hope for Holyoke Youth

Last month a very refreshing event took place. The Stone Soup Leadership Institute, in partner with many local forces, led a series of events that brought hope to Holyoke.

Hope for the youth, for the distraught, and hope for our Latino community.

Will Morales, Commissioner for Boston's Youth and Family Services, made a heart-warming trip to our city of Holyoke. Morales came to Holyoke to give the youth of our city a piece of his story.

I had the honor of presenting Will at Dean Technical High School and watched as he inspired my fellow youth. Will's story brought tears, laughter, smiles, and hope to the many faces in that room. He showed them that they don't have to be a product of their environment, that as youth searching for an education; they have options.

Next Will traveled to Holyoke Community College for an intimate talk with Holyoke youth. Representative Aaron Vega then invited community leaders from all over the Western Mass area to a luncheon with Will. People representing all walks of life - from violence prevention to Girls Inc. These are the people who make the push for change. They work tirelessly around the clock in order to provide a better vision for our youth.

For this I give my deepest gratitude to all of them. They are the support that hold youth like me up. They allow us to soar as far as we want, set the bar as high as we want, and do everything in their power to make sure we achieve past the heights we desire. These people are the concrete that allows us to build a strong tower for our lives. They hold us up, cheer us on, keep us going, and guide us towards a better future.

It was very meaningful to see such a variety of leaders coming together for the benefit of our youth. It was a very powerful statement to the youth of our city. A statement that leaders will be here when we need them. We just need to coordinate with them.

This is exactly what happened at our event with Will Morales – we talked about how we can better coordinate services between youth and adults. Learning from innovative practices from other communities is where hope lies for our youth. We need to persist in coming up with new ways to bring our youth and our leaders together for the benefit of our community. Our community needs to continue to formulate plans to unite and strengthen our community for the youth. This needs to be done to secure their hope and secure their future for a prosperous future.

J'Anthony Smith
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