



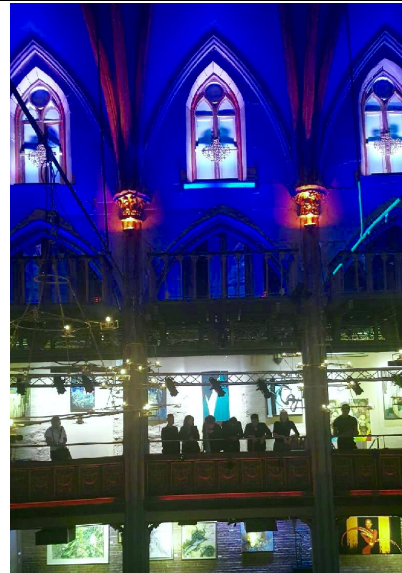
**Isobel Williams**  
**Future Model & Designer**

Over the weekend four Holyoke youth travelled to Manhattan for the New York Fashion Show. We had the opportunity to meet people and experience the Fashion Industry first hand. Our mentor Kassandra Castillo was a former top model in San Juan. She's featured major designers on runways and featured in many magazines. Now a successful entrepreneur living in the City, she's been in the fashion industry for 14 years. Thanks to her guidance and support, we saw some exquisite places and met some incredible people.

On the second day of our trip, we were outside an old church, home to the Angel Orensanz Foundation. A crowd starting to form around us as we waited for the doors to open to the Arts Heart Fashion Show. Known for its positive energy, and up-and-coming designers, it attracts people from around the world.



Equipped with our new business cards, we had our first lesson in the power of networking. The Institute's Director walks over to the head security guard. In just a few minutes he walks across the street to meet us. He aspires to become a leader too, so he was happy to help us. We got the VIP Treatment - first in line, with the best spots upstairs looking down onto runway. Astonishing what you can do by just talking to people!



Once inside, the transformed church was all lit up. The logo blazed across the stage - what was once an altar -- is now the perfect background for the fashion branding and runway.



The show featured designer Edison Lu and his Asian couture. Out comes the models walking down the catwalk -- each outfit is cooler than the last. The new casual clothing line has a cute twist. The menswear was unique looking with the jackets dressed down, embellished with sticker designs. At the end, the models shared the stage and the designer took a bow.



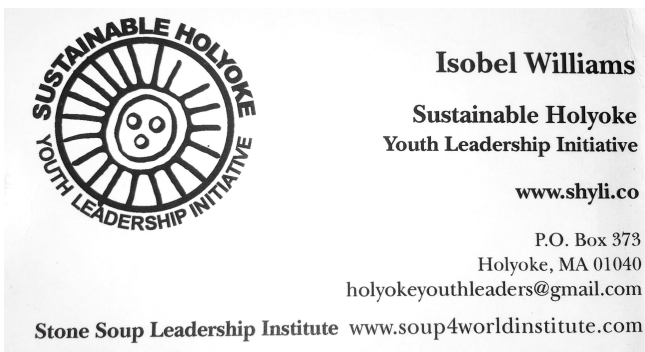
Once the official show was over and the cheering subsided, our team headed down stairs to make connections. With no clue who to talk with or even what to say I slipped into the crowd.



Since I'd helped redesign our new logo, I was especially excited to share my first business cards. I quickly noticed one of the models, Victory Henley who had walked the runway. When I gingerly asked her about modeling, she kindly offered to help me learn the ropes. I was thrilled - and gave her my card!



Everyone on the team was practicing their networking skills. Gabe and Jose met with the designer Edison Lu himself and some models.



Alexis bravely introduced himself to Nicolas, the designer's fashion video producer from Dubai. He even invited him to come to Holyoke for "Fashion Week"! He even got a total stranger to take their photo. It turned out his company was Porsche models from Florida. He interested in meeting Cassandra -- and I got to meet him too!



We experienced more than we ever imagined. while I moved out of my comfort zone and I was nervous at moments. The whole experience was priceless!

