



**Kutasha Bryan Silva**  
**Cellist, Educator, Scholar**

**Kutasha Silva** is a Ph. D. candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana in Curriculum & Instruction. She is an educator, musician, and scholar who is passionate about innovative forms of education for K-12 students.

Kutasha serves as the interim **Holyoke Project Coordinator**. She led the Institute's first Summit Orientation at Fiesta Cafe with youth, parents, and nominating organizations. She worked closely with youth and parents to complete their application process and prepare them to serve as Holyoke delegates to the Summit. Kutasha then spoke at the kick-off event at Holyoke City Hall with Representative Aaron Vega and traveled with the Holyoke youth delegation to Martha's Vineyard. As the Summit Co-Director, she worked closely with Holyoke youth to envision their dreams for their lives, their community and the world. For the fall program, Kutasha works viturally with Holyoke youth using the Institute's Life-Planning Tools on TouchStone Leaders Platform. She is co-designing the **BETA Entrepreneur Course** for the Young Entrepreneurs of Holyoke project in partnership with the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce's SPARK program.

Kutasha began working with the Institute in 2004 as the first Project Coordinator for VYLI (Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative: [www.vyli.com](http://www.vyli.com)). Kutasha championed VYLI's Cultural Arts and Entrepreneurship Initiatives. She helped tailor lesson plans using the Institute's book and curriculum, ***Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes***. She co-facilitated weekly workshops on Cultural Arts—working together with local songwriters, dance teachers, and an archaeologist—and Entrepreneurship—where she was trained and certificate by the Institute's partner, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship on Wall Street. Together with a group of dedicated teens, Kutasha created a successful business on the Vieques boardwalk, selling t-shirts and homemade jewelry to tourists - offering teens a part-time income, and an opportunity to hone their entrepreneurial skills. After two years, Kutasha was inspired to pursue her own dream of becoming a musician and music teacher by obtaining a second bachelor's degree in San Juan.

Kutasha's studies include a Master's Degree in Cello Performance from the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico where she wrote her thesis *Women Composers of the 19th Century and their Works Written for Cello*. As a Gilman Scholar in Holland, Kutasha wrote her thesis *Women and their Relation to Music* for her Bachelor's degree in Women Studies. Ultimately, Kutasha aims to be instrumental in transforming the educational system to become a place where students enjoy going to school and teachers are treated with respect and offered proper compensation.

**Sustainable Holyoke Youth Leadership Initiative**  
[www.shyli.co](http://www.shyli.co)