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Ethnicity on the Runway: New York Fashion Week Designers Talk Diversity

Hannah D'Avanzo
Southern Adventist University, hannahdavanzo@southern.edu

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By Hannah D'avanzo

My media outlet, HD Access Media, has allowed me to attend international events and meet people of all backgrounds. One thing I noticed at designer shows is that diversity was often limited.

Attending Milan Fashion Week in previous years, for example, I recall not seeing a variety of ethnicities represented among designers, models or even the audience attending the shows.
So, when I recently had the opportunity to attend New York Winter Fashion Week, I decided to investigate as part of our Interactive Journalism class at Southern Adventist University.

Though most people would like to claim that diversity is important to them, how far will diversity go? Will women of ethnic backgrounds be included in this exclusive circle?

After several days of watching shows and talking to designers, my previous perspective changed.

Many designers said diversity was important to them. They not only expressed the belief but acted upon it by including models of different ethnicities to model their clothes.

I spoke with designers from all different parts of the world who came to showcase their designs and beautifully incorporated their culture into their clothes. Present were Middle Eastern designers, Asian designers and European designers.

Those I interviewed included Hakan Akkaya, Christian Cowan, Kirsten Ley, and Marisa P. Clark.

Along with diverse designers, we saw models of all backgrounds proudly showcasing the newest trends and embracing their ethnicities.

To summarize New York Winter Fashion Week: It was a time where we could see, feel, and hear diversity, both on and off the runway.