

## At Male-Model Audition, It's Tough Even Without Competition

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"Fashion At Morgan" club provides industry contacts.

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The scene resembled an "American Idol" audition. The panel waited to judge the contestants as they entered individually. In a neighboring room, the students were asked to wait as they were given application forms with questions about their interest in modeling.

Fashion At Morgan (FAM), Morgan State University's fashion design and merchandising club, was conducting a male model search at the Student Center. From 6:30 p.m. until 9 p.m., Theodore Powell, the president, and three other members of the fashion club, seated themselves behind a table judging contestants in an otherwise empty room.

Tarrence Hughes, who holds the Mr. FAM title, assured the contestants that their answers did not determine their acceptance into the "FAM-ily."

Each was given a number; when it was called, the student had to enter the room and stand at the end of the hall.

Rhythmic music began to play, and the contestant was given the opportunity to strut his stuff on the "catwalk." Nevertheless, the contestants were oblivious to what the judges were actually looking for.

Initially, only a few showed up. But the low numbers did not increase their chances for acceptance. The judges remained unrelenting.

"I'm sorry you did not make the cut; however, we do encourage you to try out for the spring audition."

This was the judge's mantra as the guys were politely turned down, one after the other.

Tyron Gordon, one of the many who was urged to try again next semester, used his rejection as an incentive to return even more prepared for the next model call in the fall. "I don't mind. This just gives me more motivation to try harder next time," Gordon said. When asked what he intends to do differently, Gordon said he would alter his walk and make a little more eye contact.

Demetrius Blue was perplexed by the judges' decision. As a fashion-merchandising major, he intended to learn as much as he could about the industry through FAM. He had entered quite confidently. But after the judges told him to try again next semester, his attitude changed.

"I don't know what they're looking for. I just don't understand. I'm not trying out for this again. This is B.S.," he said.

It was Feb. 8. Almost two hours had gone by, and only four men had been chosen. What exactly were the judges looking for?

"As far as a look, we're not searching for a particular type of cheekbone, eyebrow or hairstyle; rather a basic, strong walk. We are looking for men who have masculine, strong walks, men who can carry themselves assertively on the runway," said Powell, FAM's president.

In a manner jocular yet sincere, Powell continued to a colleague, "I mean, if you're 'butt ugly,' I don't think that's going to work; there is definitely a level in the modeling industry that the consumer is willing to accept. Let's be realistic, if your look doesn't sell to the public, there is no need for you to be on the runway."

Indeed, FAM took the modeling business quite seriously. Through its rejections, it demonstrated that it was in no desperate need for male models.

Why would someone would put himself through such an ordeal?

Barrett Keithley and Jontell Hinton, both members of FAM, spoke about their auditions last year.

Their tryouts consisted not only of modeling for the judges, but learning an entire modeling/dance routine.

Both said working with FAM undeniably has its benefits. Not only does it boost one's confidence level, it contributes to a great social life.

At 8:19 p.m., Sean Devore entered the room, the last one to audition. His composed-yet-confident aura shone as he walked for the judges. He was accepted. "It's probably the strength of my walk, and the look on my face; it wasn't too over the top, yet I was sure of myself," Devore said.

In the end, of 16 entrants, a mere six were chosen to join the elite FAM family.

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