

Designing Their Dreams: With C-Note Line and Store, Morgan Student Fills a Void

Contributed by {{Catherine Sudue - Black College Wire}}
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He got started when he worked at a screen printing shop.

By Catherine Sudue
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On 4626 York Road in Baltimore, a white sign reads, in bold print, "C-Note: Creating Better Opportunities to Excel."

At the entrance of this store stand three mannequins clothed in thermals and vests that say, "C-Note." Here you will find a man with locks and a green-and-white shirt that reads "C-Note." He is Christopher Simon, 23, a Morgan State University student and Baltimore native. He is showcasing his new and highly anticipated C-Note collection of women's clothing apparel.

The urban wear clothing store was created in 1999 after Simon, its CEO and founder, decided to use his passion for design and

entrepreneurship to start a clothing line and benefit the community.

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The C-Note clothing line has been heavily promoted. The NBA Portland Trail Blazers' Juan Dixon wore C-Note clothing while visiting BET, State Property joined C-Note for a concert, and Fashion at Morgan, Morgan State's official fashion design merchandising club, has heated up the runway with C-Note apparel.

Simon says he used his inventiveness to "basically fill a void that I thought and still think is in the clothing industry. I felt like I could use my creativity and versatility," and he said one can see the difference in his sweatsuits and color schemes.

"I used to work at a screen printing shop," he continued. "I would draw a bunch of designs but I never had

the funds to produce my designs on the clothing. When my managers went outside, I would print my own shirts without them knowing. I sold it to my friends and family."

With the support of friends and family, Simon was determined to create his own clothes.

"My mother bought me a sewing machine," and observing the styles of his peers, he said he "noticed that clothing companies were coming out with 'capris' that were too short. In Baltimore, we wear pants and shorts long. I would buy sweatpants, cut it up, and take the hems out," Simon said, speaking of men's styles.

At the time, Simon was attending the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore and alternated between his studies and his dream.

But the rural, poverty-stricken environment did not provide a large enough market or great enough demand for his clothing.

He decided to return to Baltimore.

Simon transferred to Morgan, secured a \$10,000 business loan, and opened his first store. He "would ride through the 'hood I mean drug-infested neighborhoods trying to sell sweat hoods. I would sell my clothes in the back of a Geo Metro hatchback.

Simon has been able to serve his community through philanthropy.

He manages an intramural basketball team, donates to group homes, and is starting a nonprofit organization that will award annual \$500 scholarships to two Morgan students majoring in marketing, entrepreneurship and fashion design.

In addition, Simon is contracting for a line of polo shirts and other golf apparel.

Beyonce's "Irreplaceable" is playing in his store. Phone calls inquire about the C-Note female clothing line launch. People steadily enter and exit. Simon remains humble and goal oriented as he talks about his dreams.

"Five years from now, I see C-Note clothing being distributed in department stores like Bloomingdales. I don't ever plan to work for nobody," he says.

Catherine Sudue, a student at Morgan State University, writes for the Spokesman.

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