



Annual Report 2017

Designing Lives, Empowering Women

Custom Collaborative (CC) shapes women's lives by providing training, work, and business opportunities in New York City's garment industry. Our successes in 2017 included the graduation of two cohorts of students from our Training Institute and the launch of our Business Incubator.



Cuite and her daughter model Cuite's final design project as she graduates from Custom Collaborative's Training Institute at our August 2017 Graduation Ceremony.

We continue to provide training and support to women from low-income and immigrant communities in fashion-industry work. Today, CC trains women in the standard techniques, environmental sustainability, and ethical business practices of the women's apparel industry. Our participants learn professional sewing and design skills, overcome barriers to earned income, empower themselves and each other, and, ultimately, bring equity and inclusion to the global business of fashion. CC also collaborates with small designers in the New York metro area and is part of a growing network of women-led garment manufacturers developing a national movement to expand living-wage opportunities in the garment industry.

2017 Highlights

- January—Custom Collaborative Caucus: Training Institute students, volunteers, and other stakeholders came together to discuss big ideas and develop action plans for further developing CC and magnifying its impact. The event coincided with the historic first worldwide Women's March.
- February—CC's first Training Institute class graduates.
- March—CC adds one-on-one financial coaching to supplement the Training Institute's financial literacy curriculum.
- May—CC's data analysis prompts CC to extend the term of the Training Institute's curriculum from 12 to 14 weeks.

- August—New York Institute of Technology partners with CC to plan and produce our graduation event, including makeup artists and flowers for graduates.
- September—CC is commissioned by Hope Community to design and create table centerpieces for their gala dinner as a sustainable alternative to live flowers.
- November—E-commerce platform launches selling student and graduate produced designs.



July—CC receives its first commercial order, sewing scarves and headbands for Karema Deodata Millinery.



August—CC graduate Nanya (left) is commissioned to create a wedding gown for a fashion designer.



October—The New York Times features photo from New York Women’s Foundation Gala of director wearing dress designed and created by CC graduate.



December—CC participates in its first ever pop-up market at Sugar Hill Children’s Museum providing real-time customer relations training.

“I came into this country just four months ago, and God has already blessed me! CC not only trained me with basic sewing skills, you also saved me from loneliness... you helped me get to know how to use the trains, how to get around on my own, something that takes many people one or more years to achieve. I have no silver or gold to repay you, but I will keep praying that your blessings will never cease. THANK YOU”—Ana, 2017 CC graduate.