

Connecting Threads on a Dominican Baseball Cap

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Introduction

Like people, the clothing we wear goes far beyond its appearance. Behind the colors and fabrics of an article of clothing, there is a story as to where it came from and what inspired its design. Before clothing becomes the finished piece you'd purchase at a store, it goes through several designs, people and stages of creation. Clothes are significant to those who wear it. By using the Dominican World Classic baseball cap of 2017, we will begin to understand how the cap is more than a set of fabrics bound together. The choice of colors and designs for the cap represents the values, hopes and dreams of not only myself but to the people of the Dominican Republic.

Background

The Dominican World Classic Baseball cap appears as any other baseball cap. This snapback has a constructed crown and a stiff bill. The baseball hat follows the basic design of the New Era companies baseball caps. The crown of the hat is red while the stiff bill is blue. On the front of the crown are the letters "R.D" in white and blue. These initials stand for "Republica Dominicana" in spanish, which translates to "Dominican Republic". Along with the colors of the flag, a patch of the Dominican flag is embroidered on the side of the hat and on the back the logo of the World Classic baseball tournament is displayed. The colors of the hat have the same intentions as the Dominican flag , "the red symbolizes the blood spilled by the fighters in the war of independence; the blue represents the sky raised above the country and from where God protects the nation and its ideas of progress while the white symbolizes the peace and union of the Dominicans." (Moen 2020). This accessory represents the passion and unity the wearer has for the country and for the sport of baseball. Baseball is the national sport of the Dominican Republic and is essentially a major part of our culture. Baseball renders hopes and dreams for a brighter future in the eyes of those who play the sport or simply watch it. Some of the most successful baseball players in the Major League Baseball (MLB) are from the Dominican Republic. Some of these players are

David “Big Papi” Ortiz and Sammy Sosa. Seeing people come from the same third world country as us, builds hope for being successful and being able to do great things.

Production of the Hat

The production of baseball caps has not always been the same. The fabric used for the making of these baseball hats has altered overtime. When they were first created in the 1880’s, baseball hats were made of straw and they were pillbox shaped. After there were multiple complaints that these hats were uncomfortable, the company “New Era” changed the style and the materials used for baseball caps. The fabric used was changed to cotton and the design changed multiple times before the New Era company settled on the snapback style we have today. The snapback style was first seen on the Brooklyn Excelsiors (an amateur baseball team). Today, most of the New Era baseball snapbacks are made of 100% cotton to ensure that the person wearing is comfortable.

The manufacturing process for baseball caps is extensive. The Dominican World Classic baseball cap was manufactured in China by the company “New Era”. This company is famous for their baseball caps all around the world. Each of their baseball snapback caps undergo similar processes in regards to manufacturing. The first thing that is collected is the material for the hat. As previously mentioned, most baseball hats, including the Dominican World Classic baseball cap, are made of 100% cotton. After the cotton is collected, the fabrics are laid on top of each other and then are cut with a fabric cutting saw. Most of the production is up to technology which cuts, bundles and sews the fabric together. There is also a visor board that goes between the cotton to give the cap the stiff bill needed to keep the sun out of the wearers eyes.

Then, comes the personalization of the hat. While most of the baseball hats we see have the same basic outline in regards to the silhouette of the hat each baseball cap has, “elaborately embroidered logos, some of which include over 30,000 stitches in order to produce the logo, they are carefully designed with the aid of a computer in order to perfectly and consistently sew that logo onto the front of the caps.” (Bryk 2020). The personalization of the Dominican baseball hat is what helps the accessory go from a basic baseball cap to something that the people of Dominican Republic can identify

with. It takes thousands of stitches to create not only the initials R.D on the hat but to also embroider the Dominican flag and the World Classic logo on the cap.

Exchange

After the hats are manufactured in factories they are sent to retail stores and other sellers who run online businesses. Baseball hats are sold nationally in the United States and also internationally, around the entire world. These hats are used to make a profit. While there are many companies that make baseball hats, the Dominican World Classic baseball cap comes from the company “New Era”. This company has become extremely popular for their baseball caps and have dominated the baseball cap industry. The price of the hat has changed overtime but, “Today, the New Era Cap Company sells their iconic hats online for between \$30 and \$50. ” (Mertes 2020). Many people purchase these hats in bulk in order to resell them on the market for a higher or lower rate. In the Dominican Republic these hats are generally priced at about 800 Dominican pesos. This is roughly about \$14 in the United States. These hats are mostly bought on occasions where Dominican pride is at a high. The cap is such a universal accessory that most of the time it does not have many high end iterations. Overall, “the affordability of the common baseball cap, as well as its longevity as a fashion statement, has helped it to remain firmly part of the modern style lexicon.” (Bass-Krueger 2019) The price of the cap ensures that almost anyone who wants to represent the Dominican Republic baseball team or country can do so.

Consumption

The Dominican World Classic baseball hat is extremely significant to those who wear it. It connects the wearer to Dominican roots. This hat can be worn by children, men, women, baseball players and those who just watch the sport. This hat brings people of the Caribbean islands together. This is because the Dominican Republic is one of the only countries in the Caribbean that plays baseball, so the team represents all the Caribbean islands this way. While no one is excluded from wearing the Dominican baseball cap, the purpose of the cap has changed overtime. In the 1880s only baseball players wore baseball caps to keep the sun out of their eyes. The

intention has changed because now, “many enthusiasts collect baseball hats from their favorite teams, universities, and schools. Others collect unusual or vintage hats.” (Sara Pendergast , Tom Pendergast , Drew D. Johnson , and Julie L. Carnagie 2013). This is another testament to the baseball hat's popularity that goes beyond its practical, functional appeal. While it began as a piece for professional players, now it is universally used for protection, fashion and showing pride.

Globalization

The importance and meaning behind the Dominican baseball hat is not only exhibited in the Dominican Republic. Here in the United States, it is easy to recognize a fellow Dominican or supporter because they're wearing the Dominican baseball hat. Personally, I have seen this hat worn on many different occasions. During the 2017 World Classic, many of my friends from different ethnic backgrounds purchased the same hat and wore it to show their support for the team and country. I have seen people wear it in the airport and even inside school for multicultural events. This baseball hat brings people together. Two wearers of the hat will notice one another and form a short relationship with one another by giving a slight head nod. The head nod means, “I support Dominican Republic too” or “I'm Dominican too”. This hat is not only worn during the World Classic tournament but it is also worn on days where people show pride for the Dominican Republic. Some of these occasions include the Dominican parade during the summer and on Dominican Independence Day in February. The Dominican World Classic baseball cap brings people all around the world together because we are able to recognize each other from afar and we understand the meaning behind wearing it. The hat is worn to show pride, nationalism and support. Wearing it connects us to others with the same intentions.

Conclusion

Ultimately, researching the Dominican World Classic baseball hat has made me appreciate this accessory more than before. Before the research, this hat was simply that: a hat. I did not know the extensive manufacturing process it took to make this hat. I was not aware of how important the details, such as the colors of the hat, were to the

history of the Dominican Republic. This hat represents the unity and passion Dominican people and supporters have for both the country and for the national baseball team. I now have a deeper connection to this hat than I ever did. I will continue to wear this hat with pride in remembrance of all I have absorbed about its past and how it has become what it is today.

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