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Media, Culture, & Identity

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Reflection Paper on Baseball’s Changing Culture

Why did you pick this topic?

All my life, I have played basketball. My dad also played basketball in college at the University of Hartford and Fairfield. From my very first steps, he always made sure a basketball was present within the grips of my hands. Fortunately, this did not go in vain, as the sport ended up working out in my favor. I am now a member of the Men’s Basketball team at the University of Richmond, on a full scholarship, and I like to think that I have had a decent career thus far. With that being said, this did not happen overnight. It took many long hours in the gym, training, in hopes of becoming the best player I could possibly be. Because of this, from my very first steps, to the present, my life has pretty much revolved around the sport of basketball. Everything I have done in my past, was intricately motivated for the sport of basketball. In short, all of my time was pretty much dedicated towards this sport. It would be safe to say, that because of this, watching basketball in my free team is not something that I wanted to do. Luckily, my grandfather and dad, both being from Massachusetts, brainwashed me into being a huge Patriots (NFL) and Red Sox (MLB) fan. I was able to watch these two teams all my life and indulge in these two different sports in my spare time. After years of watching these teams, I gained an amazing amount of respect for these other sports as a whole, and in return, watched them regularly. Then, once I transferred to boarding school for my junior and senior years of high school, I was forced to play baseball in the spring. Through this experience, I gained even more respect for what I consider the hardest sport on the planet. Baseball is so unique in many different ways and the culture in which it is build around, compared to other sports, and is probably the most unique part about everything in which it surrounds. This is something that fascinated me as I have learned so much about the sport over the many years of observation. I chose this topic, because not only is it something I am very interested in, but also because I thought it was a perfect example, in the sports world, of some of the ideas we have discussed throughout the semester.

What is the argument of your piece and the three keywords you used?

The argument of my piece is that the MLB (Major League Baseball) is using various forms of content to change its culture and in return, diversify their audience. As I mentioned in the video, baseball has been around for a long time and has a very traditional culture. There are many customs and unwritten rules about celebrations that have lasted over this long period of time. Because of this, The MLB has a very specific audience, which consists of mainly white males above the age of 50. It is very clear that the MLB is trying to change this target audience, with the varying strategies they are engaging in like, interviews during games, having players wear microphones during the game, different camera angles, and promoting bat flip celebrations. The three keywords that I used were culture, stereotype, and content. Content was the clearest one of them all, because content is what the MLB is using to fix this issue. Culture is created through a group of people with the same beliefs and customs. Baseball purists have these very traditional values and have developed this old school culture. They have tried to keep it around for as long as possible, but now this culture is attempting to be shifted by the MLB. A stereotype is an assumption. The stereotype when someone asks about MLB fans is that they are white males. This stereotype just so happens to be true if you look at the statistics. There were many other keywords that could have worked for my video, but I felt as if these three were the best ones to display the message I wanted the audience to receive.

How and why did you make decisions for the pieces of media that you used?

There was a lot of thought that went into decisions of what media I wanted to use. In my mind I had two things that I knew I wanted to include for sure. One was that I wanted to make sure I had videos which clearly demonstrated just how much the game has changed over time. This is why I chose the video from some of the first baseball games ever played towards the beginning, and then placed the mic’d up interviews near the end. I wanted the entire video to display this change in baseball and how much more fun they are trying to make the game. Second, I wanted to make sure that I showed all the different forms of content that the MLB and people around baseball are trying to use to change this culture and diversify their audience. This included the pictures of the various camera angles, the interviews during the games, the player’s weekend with them wearing different jerseys, and the tweets showing how the MLB and its employees are really trying to promote celebrations in an effort to change the culture. I wanted to make sure I showed variety in the ways that they are trying to implement change. By giving all of these different examples, I think it displayed the severity of the lengths the MLB is taking in order to create a shift in its culture. In terms of the other pieces of media, those were all on the fly decisions that I thought would be beneficial to the video’s message. The graph that showed the demographics of the fan base and the pictures of the empty stadiums, I believe set up the video and the argument well. Then, the videos of the bat-flipping were a source of entertainment. I thought that even if you know nothing about baseball or the sport, the raw emotion of those celebrations are very cool to see. Luckily, I was also able to match them up with the tweets that I found to support my message.

How did the process of making your video shape how you understand media, culture, and identity?

I think like most things in this class, this video made me realize how wide the realm of Media Culture and Identity actually spans. The idea of bat flipping in a baseball game is never something that I would have imagined related to MCI before taking the class. But, as we went on throughout the semester, my eyes were really opened to what falls under these categories. It also showed me how these different topics, such as mine, relates to all the keywords we learned about throughout the semester. There were at least 8 keywords that I felt like I could have used for my video. Again, this just emphasizes how MCI is so relatable to so many things in our daily lives.

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