



DRSEA INFORMER

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Configuración De La Norma (Setting The Standard) – The Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy recently held its third annual ***“Making A Difference In The Dominican Republic”*** at the 809 Lounge in New York City. The event included a special tribute to the Pittsburgh Pirates for the team’s outstanding and sustained commitment to the advancement of Dominicans and the Dominican Republic, particularly in the area of education. The Pirates are the only Major League Baseball team that provides a comprehensive mandatory education program for its prospects in the Dominican Republic.

Honorary co-chairs of the event were New York State Senator Adriano Espaillat, New York State Assemblywoman Gabriela Rosa, and New York City Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez. Co-hosting the event were the Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation and the New York Dominican Officers Organization.

I have personally witnessed the impact the Pirates have had on reforms in Dominican baseball as it relates to education and believe the Pirates have set a standard to change the lives of their players and make the Dominican Republic a better place.



DRSEA Board Members Sam Brooks and Esperanza Ramirez



DRSEA Board Members present portrait to Pittsburgh Pirates delegation

Harold Mendez, co-founder and chairman of the DRSEA Board of Trustees, also understands the contribution the Pirates have made, explaining “It is important to the DRSEA to recognize those who truly make a difference in the Dominican Republic, who embrace a philosophy of developing the total player, and with that in mind we are truly honored to pay tribute to the contributions of the Pirates.”

The fundraising event also included a lively discussion on baseball in the Dominican Republic, particularly as it relates to education. The Pirates were represented by Tyrone Brooks of the team’s Operations Department; Brooks is the founder of the Baseball Industry Network, a baseball networking group that includes over 19,000 members from around the world, covering the full gamut of people working within or connected to the baseball industry.

Also on the panel was Dan Rosenheck, sports editor and deputy Americas editor for The Economist. He also writes on baseball statistics and economics for The New York Times. He worked for five years as a foreign correspondent in Latin America, and is writing a book on baseball in the region.

Some of the discussion focused on the Pirates’ reasons for establishing an education program, much of it stemming from the team’s belief that they have a responsibility for preparing prospects for life beyond the baseball field. “We felt we had to do more to make sure these kids understand that there is more to life than baseball,” Brooks said.

The Pirates were also represented at the event by Trevor Gooby, Senior Director, Florida and Dominican Operations; and Mayu Fielding, ESL and Florida Operations Coordinator. Major League Baseball was represented by Chris Haydock, Director, International Operations.



Tyrone Brooks, Mayu Fielding and Trevor Gooby

More photos of the event are available at www.drsea.org. The DRSEA is still accepting donations; those interested can do so at the web site or by sending it to the DRSEA, 600 Anita Street #16, Chula Vista, CA 91911.

Todo Es Relativo (It's All Relative) – Not too long ago, someone told me that the reason they hadn't come to visit me in the almost five years I have lived in the Dominican Republic was because "I really don't want to deal with the poverty." At the time, I was somewhat offended that they would put their sensitivities ahead of spending some time with me in my adopted country, but I put it into perspective during a recent trip to New York – poverty is relative.

In truth, the poverty in the Dominican Republic is more pervasive, more profound in many ways. Many homes are without running water; many of those with water don't have the luxury of hot water. Indoor plumbing is also a luxury to many who have to rely on communal showers to bathe. Electricity in many areas is often out for hours, even days at a time.

I see people in low wage jobs or without jobs struggle to put food on the table, clothes on their children, provide gifts for birthdays. But Dominicans are the most resourceful people I have ever met; they manage and manage with a smile, happy that life has blessed them with family and friends to share even the most meager circumstances.



Having lived in New York for eight years, I was a daily witness to a different poverty, but poverty nonetheless and this was reinforced during my recent visit. I went through my old neighborhood, past the projects that teem with the city's poor and disadvantaged. I see people going through trash cans searching for food, sleeping on park benches, and begging for change. I am taken aback when a woman in the drug store asks me for help in buying baby formula and dresses me down when I refuse.



The miserableness of these people's lives is reflected on their faces, faces I juxtapose with equally impoverished Dominicans I see every day. Poverty in any form is horrible, but when you count your blessings, as I see Dominicans do, life can still be good.

I never want to get used to seeing poverty, to become numb to its affects, particularly in the Dominican Republic where I am trying to make a difference. And I also know that avoiding poverty will not make it go away.

Cuanto Más Cambian Las Cosas (The More Things Change) – I will reserve judgment on the Travon Martin decision other than to say that the killing of an unarmed black boy was a senseless tragedy and it reminded me that some things never change in America.

When I was 16, my father taught me how to drive. One of his lessons dealt with how I should act when stopped by the police. "Say 'Yes sir, no sir.' Don't argue with him. Keep your hands in plain sight. Tell him what you are reaching for." I didn't understand it then but do now; he was trying to keep me alive and more than 40 years later those lessons still need to be taught to young black boys – to keep them alive.

America may have a black president but it remains a nation full of racists and that racism raises its ugly head all too frequently, even in circumstances that should be immune – like baseball's recent All-Star game.

Many people were upset that Marc Anthony sang "God Bless America" at the event, tweeting and texting their objections in vile and racist terms, apparently offended that a "Spanish" person was permitted that honor; calling him Spanish was one of the milder terms used to describe Anthony.

In reality, Anthony is a Puerto Rican born in New York – an American citizen of all things.



I also found it ironic that Citi Field, where the game was played, is in Queens, one of the most ethnically diverse urban areas in the world. Further ironic that a record nine Dominicans appeared in the game and the greatest closer of all times, Panamanian Mariano Rivera, played in his last mid-summer classic.

Baseball may be America's pastime, but racism is as American as apple pie. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

“I know that I am a black man in a white world. In 1972, in 1947, at my birth in 1919, I know that I never had it made.” – Jackie Robinson

Las Vacaciones De Verano (Summer Break) – The DRSEA concluded its first semester of classes in June, taking a break for the summer and reopening in the fall.

The DRSEA had 15 young men in its initial class of student athletes. Classes were taught at The Palms School in San Pedro, and initially offered a concentration in English; baseball instruction was also provided.

The plan in the coming months is to expand on the number of students and provide a dormitory to house them, including international students. We have received inquiries from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Israel and Ghana, to name a few.

Applications from interested students are now being accepted. For more information, contact info@drsea.org.

Charles S. Farrell

DRSEA Contact Information in the Dominican Republic

Address: Calle 19 de Marzo, #103, Suite 305, Zona Colonial, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Phone: 829-505-2991

Website: www.drsea.org

Myspace: Myspace.com/drseaorg

Twitter: Twitter.com/drseaorg

Facebook: www.facebook.com/drseaorg

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