



December 22, 2007

Parents: Yanks should axe gang caps

By David Freedlander, amNewYork Staff Writer | [dfreedlander@am-ny.com](mailto:dfreedlander@am-ny.com)

August 24, 2007

A group of concerned East Harlem parents are calling on the New York Yankees and Major League Baseball to stop selling hats from a cap manufacturer that adds gang colors and symbols to some of their wares.

The hats, festooned with a crown above the "NY" or with a red or blue bandannas stitched in, are well-known short-hand signs for street gangs such as the Latin Kings, the Crips, and the Bloods, according to the Johnny Rivera, president of the Coalition to Protect Our Children, which is leading the fight.

"These corporations are capitalizing on known friction within communities of color," Rivera said.

Related links

[Gang-related Yankees caps Photos](#)

"Any 11-year-old could buy one of these and get jumped if they walk in the wrong neighborhood because they don't know the signs."

New Era Cap Co., the maker of the hats, and the New York Yankees, did not respond to repeated requests for comment, but a spokesperson for Major League Baseball said: "Major League Baseball was not previously aware of the symbolism of the cap design and, of course, is very concerned about the issue."

The group is also calling on area retailers to pull the hats from their shelves, but so far only one, Tom Dick and Harry's, a sneaker store on Third Avenue, has done so.

The manager of the store, Isaiah Hill, said a friend of his was jumped after wearing one of the bandanna hats in the wrong neighborhood in East New York.

"I don't think kids should get beat up because of a hat," he said.

Gang prevention experts said the caps could trigger a dangerous reaction.

**"A lot of times a young person not in a gang will wear one of these items because they like the way they look and people who are gang members respond and react as if the kid is in fact in a gang," said Lisa Taylor-Austin, an area counselor.**

Alex Alonso, the creator of Web resource streetgangs.com, questioned why manufactures would make the caps.

"They are not being responsible," he said. "They know the audience and they know who is going to buy it. They are making far too much money to do something like that."

More articles

Copyright © 2007, AM New York



