

The Development of Air Jordans

By Tyler Soukhot

Who is the Jumpman? He is the one and only Michael Jordan. Some may know of him, because of his fantastic NBA (National Basketball Association) career. Some may know of him because of his signature shoes the Air Jordans. I am one of those people who know him because of his shoes. I would have loved to see him play, but the Jumpman is retired.

Michael Jordan played in the NBA with the Chicago Bulls, a NBA team based in Chicago, Illinois and the Washington Wizards another NBA team based in Washington, D.C. He signed with Nike during his rookie career and now makes millions from his shoes the Air Jordan. He now is retired, the Chairman of the Charlotte Hornets another NBA team based in Charlotte, North Carolina, and A successful businessman.

Michael Jordan is also a retired baseball player. Michael wanted to pursue his father's vision of having his son play in the MLB (Major League Baseball). He played for the Birmingham Barons and the Chicago White Sox in the minor leagues as number forty-five and thirty-five. He shocked the sports world with his decision to play minor league baseball. He first signed with the Chicago White Sox that was owned by Jerry Reinsdorf, who is also the owner of the NBA team, the Chicago Bulls.

Michael got his start in basketball when he played for Emsley A.Laney High School, where he boosted his basketball career. Michael tried out for the varsity basketball team as a sophomore at the height of 5'11. They thought that he was too short to play, but he was the star of the junior varsity team. He had several forty-point games. That summer after his junior year, he grew 4 inches. When he came back to high school for his senior year, he earned a spot on the varsity roster. That year, he

averaged twenty points per game. Then he was selected to be on the McDonald's All-American Team. He had a great high school career.

After high school, Michael played for the North Carolina Tar Heels. He became ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference) Rookie of the year. He hit the game-winning shot to beat Georgetown in the NCAA championship game in 1982. It was a real highlight of his career!

Jordan has received many awards for his athletic career, such as the Naismith and Wooden college player of the year awards. After college, in 1984, Michael Jordan entered into the 1984 NBA Draft. He was selected third overall by the Chicago Bulls. Michael would have been the first picked, but the first two teams were in need of a center.

In his first season as a rookie, he was voted into the starting line-up of the NBA all-star game. Later on, during his first season, he was voted Rookie of the year. He had a stellar career, winning six NBA championships, six MVP titles, and fourteen All-star appearances. He also became the first NBA player to become a billionaire, because of his shoes and his paychecks.

Michael was so popular as a player that it made sense for him to use his name on a line of sports-related products. He developed his own line of signature shoes, called "Jordans". Michael signed with Nike for a 5-year endorsement contract of the shoes. The NBA fined Michael \$5,000 dollars regarding the NBA rules of shoe color. He got fined because the shoes did not have enough white. Nike gladly payed the bill and continued to produce white shoes. The fines added up to \$400,000 that would be taken out of his NBA salary of \$600,000. Michael didn't really care, because Nike paid those fines for him.

Dangers and Child Labor

Jordan's shoes have made lots of sales then and now. In 2011, Michael Jordan's signature shoes, made 91 to 160 million dollars profit. Jordan has lots of money right? Then why not pay the underpaid workers that make these shoes?

In 1997, about 10,000 Indonesian shoe factory workers went on a strike because of wage violations. In that same month, 1,600 Vietnamese workers went on strike to try to get just a one-cent-per-hour raise. A Chinese factory went on strike because of invalid contracts and false pension promises. Nike factories in China had people working overtime without being paid. Some workers were even children as young as eight years old - real child labor. Also, some of the shoe factories held slaves to work by holding their passports so that couldn't leave the country.

Nike is a big company that has made millions of dollars off of sweatshops and child labor. Unfortunately, by having a shoe contract with Nike, it seems like Michael Jordan also supports sweatshops and child labor.

Almost 20% of five to fourteen-year-old workers are paid very low wages. Poorer countries have children from five to fourteen working in dangerous conditions with low wages. Children in parts of Asia, Africa, and South Africa have no choice but to work long hours with minimal pay, if their parents need for them to work. Some children have to work to support their little siblings, too, because their parents have died of diseases or other problems.

In Honduras, there are about 65,000 to 70,000 workers. Estimates indicate that 13% of those workers are ages twelve to fifteen-years-old. Those teens are working twelve to fourteen hours a day and they are not being paid very much. In Honduras, if you see an American-style school bus with hundreds of kids unloading, you might think

that they are going to a middle school, but they are not. They are actually kids that are going to work at a factory. Making goods for the United States. These kids work from seven in the morning to nine o'clock at night.

There are 115 million children working at ages five to seventeen. About 22,000 of those children die each year because of hazardous factory working conditions. This is not even the worst of them all. Some kids work on construction sites and in mining.

The desire for these shoes is real. There is such a thing as customer vandalism, where people rage in fights and lose their lives to win Jordan sneakers. A New Jersey man was stabbed in line while waiting to buy a pair of Jordans. A lady was arrested for leaving her five-year-old and two-year-old children in the car to go into the mall to buy a pair of Jordans. Gunshots were fired at a Jordan XI release in a mall in California. A teen in Atlanta got his Air Jordan Retro VI's stolen from him by two other teens. Later, the two other teens were arrested. A photo they posted on social media caught the two teens. Also, a sixteen-year-old youth tried to rob two men for their Air Jordans but got shot by one of the men and died. For many years, approximately, 1,200 victims dies annually over sneakers. Even though that number has decreased some, it's still a problem. People get seriously hurt. Some could have lost their lives because of these shoes and some already have lost their lives. So--are Air Jordans really worth price of death?

The Creators

Besides the rampage and violence that Air Jordans cause, they are really nice shoes. So nice, that people are willing to stand in line for days for them, probably die for them. Air Jordans were first released in 1985. The person who designed the first Jordan shoe was Peter Moore. Peter Moore is a former designer for Nike. He created the Air

Jordan 1's, the shoe that started it all. Did you know that the Jordan wings on the Jordan 1 shoe was sketched on a napkin during one of Peter's flights because he saw a kid wearing Pilot Wings and made the connection from wings and Michael Jordan? If you don't know what pilot wings are, they are little pins that pilots wear to show that they are the pilot. Nike wanted Peter Moore to feature the Nike swoosh. The Air Jordan shoe was similar to other Nike shoes created, such as the Air Force 1's, and Nike Dunks.

Bruce Kilgore, the designer of the Air Jordan Retro 2's. Also, known famous for the creation of the Air Force 1, that featured "Air in a box" and also known for the shoe sock racers. Bruce created the Air Jordan 2's. He made it a luxury shoe. The shoe had lizard prints and did not include the Nike swoosh. Which was so important for every Nike shoe. It was Air Jordan's first shoe that did not include the Nike swoosh.

Tinker Hatfield is the designer of the Air Jordan 3 through 30, designer of the world's first cross training shoes the Nike Air Trainers, and designer of the Nike Air Max. He joined Nike in 1981 and started designing shoes during 1985. He is currently Nike's Vice President for design and special projects. Tinker designed numerous shoes for over three decades. He was considered a "Legendary Designer".

Some people in the sneaker community may not know some of the Air Jordan designers, but they know the sneakers. Bizarre isn't it? We all have to agree we wouldn't have Jordan shoes without them. The sneaker community would be different, changed. Tinker Hatfield the designer of many Air Jordan's, if we did not have him we wouldn't have the many different Jordans we have today.

Sneaker Society

Michael Jordan's shoes are some of what started the sneaker community. Some people might argue against me and say Air Forces are. I agree but Jordan's shoes

made the sneaker community grow bigger. When the Jordan 1's were released it made people think differently about athletic shoes.

Let's talk about the sneaker society or community. The sneaker community is made up of many different types of people. There are slang terms for each type of sneaker fanatic, who are known as "sneakerheads." Sneakerheads are people who buy all of the shoes they like, and they know a lot about the shoes. They may have closets full of every type of sneaker. "Hypebeasts" are people who buy the shoe if a lot of other people like it. Even if the shoe is not really a hot shoe, they will get it if others get it. The "Catch and Releasers" are those who buy shoes to resell for way more than their original price. If the shoe is sold out in stores that is the best time for the catch and releasers to resell a particular shoe for a profit. For example--the shoe "yeezys" are Kanye West's shoes that Adidas makes. The shoe sells in stores for a retail of \$200. The resell value is \$800 or more. Even if the shoe is ugly they will buy it because everyone else likes them. I don't want to name all the different types of sneaker people or I will have ten pages already. But that's the most famous type people who make up the sneaker community.

Air Jordan shoe sales have really continued to increase. Retros are flying off shelves. Michael Jordan has made lots of money back then and now. Air Jordan's used to be relatively inexpensive, compared to the price for a pair of Air Jordans now. The 1984 Air Jordan 1's retailed for \$65. Now the Air Jordan 1's retail for \$80 to \$150 a pair. Air Jordans sit on the shelves for a long time now because the main reason is they made the Air Jordans cost more. Jordans are as popular as the Jordan XI and Jordan 4's retail now for \$160 for kid's sizes and for adult sizes \$220. You can buy Jordans anywhere--sneaker stores in malls, Facebook, ebay, Craigslist, anywhere. I say stay

safe and buy Jordans in store. If you want to buy one model of shoe that you really love--go for it--but do not pay crazy prices. Nike makes lots of money just off of Jordans. In 2014, Michael Jordan made more money from his sales of Jordans than he made in his 15-season NBA career. He made \$100 million dollars and his NBA season salary was a mere \$94 million.

Sneaker Education

Jermaine King, a college professor at Johnson C. Smith University (A college located in Charlotte, North Carolina) is teaching the first-ever English course on sneaker culture. "I teach it no differently than I would teach any other course...the major difference is that we are examining the phenomenon that is sneaker culture," said Jermaine King.

The Changes

Hip-Hop culture is what's changing the style of people looks today. Popular Hip-Hop artists are also changing people's looks. People want to look like their favorite artists. Some include Drake, Kanye, Rihanna, and much other artist. Those famous personalities are what changes the looks we have now. Some people today do not care how much their clothing and shoes cost. They will buy the item if they see or hear about one of their favorite artists wearing them. Drake is a known artist who now collaborates with Michael Jordan and created a shoe that sells for \$400 to \$500. Kanye West is another known artist who has his own shoe with Adidas. Its called "Yeezys", and they are worth \$800 to \$1,500. People want these shoes because they are associated with famous names. Michael Jordan makes lots of money selling these sneakers because they know people want them and because everyone's a famous artist and wearing them or is doing a collaboration with Jordan Brand!

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