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THE CHRONICLE

History | Heritage | Culture

Volume 47, Number 37

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

THURSDAY, July 8, 2021

LOCAL BLACK-OWNED CLOTHING LINES ARE ON THE RISE

Winston-Salem native's clothing line gaining traction

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

In 2016 Winston-Salem native Quentin Jackson set out on a journey to create his own clothing line. Although the journey hasn't been easy, today Q Jackson Apparel Company (QJAC) is a licensed apparel provider with partnerships with several HBCUs, and he says that it's just the beginning.

Fresh out of high school, Jackson attended Norfolk State University (NSU) where he majored in graphic design. He only stayed at NSU for a year; but Jackson said that's where he found the motivation to become an entrepreneur.

"After my first year I had to come home because I did absolutely nothing," Jackson laughed. "But it also broadened my horizons and introduced me to a lot of things. I always say Norfolk State was the first time I saw young Black kids who wanted to really be something and actually doing the work."

After leaving NSU, Jackson spent some time at WSSU where he majored in art, before he eventually decided to follow his dream.

When he first launched his apparel company, Jackson sold merchandise that



Submitted photo

Quentin Jackson, founder and owner of Q Jackson Apparel Company.

featured his artwork, but it wasn't long before he decided to focus on HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). "The art work only lasted about six months. It didn't last long because I immediately saw the need for

HBCU apparel," Jackson said.

"At that point, I left Winston-Salem State because I believed it had served its purpose for me and I'm happy I did."

Although he decided to leave WSSU, Jackson

said he continued to learn. He had to learn how to get licensed, where to get the apparel, where to get labels from and a host of other things before he could officially launch. After working through that, Jackson officially

launched 105 Clothing, to represent the 105 HBCUs across the country at the time. But when he tried to trademark the name, he faced his first real obstacle. Levi Jeans submitted paperwork to Jackson saying if the trademark was approved, they would file for copyright infringement. Levi argued that the name caused issues with their Levi 501 brand of jeans.

Jackson said initially he was going to fight for the name but his lawyers advised him to change the name, and he decided to go with 105 HBCU. "My lawyer explained that Levi has the money to keep the case going and I could end up not having a name," Jackson explained. He said after working under the moniker 105 HBCU for a while, he decided to go with QJAC because he didn't just want to limit the brand to HBCUs.

"I changed from 105 HBCU because I felt like it limited me," he said.

Since changing the name, Jackson said things have really taken off. Q Jackson Apparel Company now has trademark partnerships with WSSU, NSU, N.C. A&T, N.C. Central University, Johnson C. Smith University, Clark Atlanta and he is cur-

rently working on partnerships with Elon and Wake Forest. Because QJAC is a collegiate licensed brand, royalties from sales go back to the schools.

Other popular items on the website include "The Winston Tee," which has a large "WS" in the center of the shirt and names of well-known places and people inside the letters and the QJAC Signature shirts and hats.

Jackson said he is always trying to find ways to improve the brand. He said 10 years from now QJAC will be home to the largest manufacturing facility on the East Coast and have the ability to give thousands of people jobs. He said his goal is to be able to cut out the middleman and make his own hats, shirts and other apparel.

"I'm not working as fast as I would like to, but each brick is being laid," Jackson said. "I'm going to compete and I'm going up there with Adidas, Nike ... I'm going with the big boys."

For more information on Q Jackson Apparel Company visit qjacksonapparelcompany.com or visit "Q. Jackson Apparel Company LLC" on Facebook.

His style, his way

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

Rico Henderson has never been one to follow the crowd, but instead has always marched to the beat of his own drum and his clothing line, C.I.O.R. (Chaos In Our Reign), is no different.

Henderson, a full-time barber, has always had an eye for fashion and art. This is also not his first run at designing as he first began nearly a decade ago, but did not see the immediate returns he was looking for, so he chose other means of income to support his family.

"I used to do it about ten years ago, but I stopped doing it because the money wasn't coming fast enough," said Henderson. "I was too busy in the

streets hustling and stuff like that. I didn't want to concentrate on that then, but now I do. I like clothes and I like art, so I just combined the two."

Henderson uses a unique tie-dye technique, combined with paints to create his one-of-a-kind apparel. He also includes messages on his clothes that are inspired by how he was feeling while making that particular item. He says he would describe his clothing line as different, abstract, unique, powerful and resilient.

"It's just how I am feeling that day or in that moment while I am doing it," Henderson said about what inspires his designs. "It depends on what kind of mood I'm in or how the energy I am having that day is what I am putting into the shirt."

"Whether it be anger or happiness or whatever, it's going on the shirt. It's emotional for the most part."

The clothing line Mis-keen was an inspiration for Henderson. He says he prides himself on not dressing like everyone else. Originality is a big part of not only his style, but his designing as well.

"I don't ever want to have my stuff like everyone else," he said. "When you see my stuff, I want



Photo by Timothy Ramsey

Rico Henderson designs one-of-a-kind shirts that have taken the Triad by storm.

people to say, 'Yeah, that's C.I.O.R. right there.' It's not your everyday run-of-the-mill.

"I am not knocking nobody that makes shirts that just press buttons on computers, because I would do that too, but I want to stand out. When you touch the shirt, you feel it, so you feel me."

Henderson takes great pride in every one of his creations. He says the fact they are all originals and can never be exactly duplicated separates his brand from others that you will

see. "All the shirts that I do are one of ones," he said about his creations. "Even if I put the same sand on the shirt, or even if it's the same color, it's not the same shirt. It can't be the same shirt, it's not exactly the same. That's what really drives me; making original stuff."

"Like I said, I want people to say that's C.I.O.R. right there, or if you see something and it ain't C.I.O.R., you know I influenced it, so it is what it is."

Henderson creates every shirt by hand from scratch. It takes him anywhere from 30 minutes to nearly two hours to make a shirt, depending on the design.

Seeing people wear and enjoy his clothing makes Henderson continue to work harder. He says it gives him the feeling to not stop this time and take his C.I.O.R. label to the highest level.

C.I.O.R. was given a big boost when Diplomat rapper Freekey Zekey wore one of Henderson's

original designs on the Drink Champs podcast hosted by N.O.R.E. and DJ EFN. Once people spotted his designs on the podcast, things began to really take off for Henderson.

Henderson has big plans for his label moving forward. He says designing the shirts and hoodies are just the first phase of what he plans to do. He wants to expand his brand to include different types of clothing.

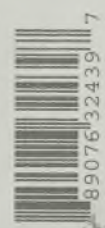
"I want to be somewhere designing clothes somewhere for somebody, I really don't know," Henderson said about where he wants his clothing line to be in the next five years. "I just want people to appreciate the art and know about it."

"It's not even about the money, I love when people appreciate the art and put it on and really put things with it; it makes me feel good. The money will come, but I do it because people like wearing it, so I will keep making it. Before when it's all said and done, C.I.O.R. is going to put a stamp on this fashion thing."

To contact Henderson about creating a design or purchasing one of his shirts, you can reach him at Henderson Rico on Facebook or on Instagram a Faded Handz77.

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