



Embajada de la República Dominicana  
ante el Reino de Bélgica, el Gran Ducado de Luxemburgo  
y Misión ante la Unión Europea

## The Diablo Cojuelo

**The diablo cojuelo** is an iconic character in Dominican popular culture with a long history. Originally brought from Spain, it made its appearance in Santo Domingo during the first carnival celebrated in America in 1520. He then spread throughout Latin America, taking on multiple expressions with particularities added according to each region and country.

It is said that this character was a playful demon who filled the patience of the devil himself and the devil threw him to the Earth, hurting his leg when he fell, leaving him lame or "cojuelo". Hence, in its original form, the lame devil was a representation of a lame and evil demon, but over time it evolved into a more festive and mischievous character.

In the Dominican Republic this cheerful figure has evolved thanks to the mixture of Hispanic traditions enriched with our strong African heritage, resulting in diverse forms of cultural and religious expression.

The "diablo cojuelo" has a great relevance in Dominican culture being the main figure of the carnival. During this festivity, people of all ages fill the streets in colourful and loud costumes of diablos cojuelos with their masks, extravagant costumes, full of bells, ribbons and mirrors, scaring, chasing and hitting passers-by with hard leather ballons made of cow bladder (vejigas) as part of a fun carnival game, with their dances, contortions and performances they represent the living expression of the joy and festive spirit of the national identity.

The diablos cojuelos have also been used as a form of social and political criticism, with the dancers often making satire of politicians and other leaders of the country. The costumes and masks used vary according to the village or region of the country, making for an intense, joyful and colourful competition during the carnival.

