

Michael Jackson's Musical Response to Racism and Social Prejudice

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Michael Joseph Jackson was an American singer, dancer, and songwriter. He belonged to an African-American family and lived in Chicago. He was the eighth son of the Jackson family. Michael Jackson started his career in music with his brothers. His popularity became dominant in the early 1980s when he became a solo singer and a songwriter. 'Thriller, Scream, Black or White, Bad, and The Way You Make Me Feel' are some of his breaking hits.

Michael Jackson had a skin tone of medium brown color by birth, but later in the 1980s, he started growing paler. Jackson had been ill with a disease called Vitiligo, and his skin soon became sensitive to the light of the sun. His treatments to cure this disease further served to make his color paler. His appearance, therefore, completely changed after he had two rhinoplasties as treatments for his disease. Michael Jackson died in 2005 while being under the care of his physician name, Murray. His death brought about a great outpour of grief from around the globe.

Michael Jackson had usually been considered a symbol of racism. It is because he also suffered from being a victim of racism as he was bullied and called 'nigger.' He began writing songs to stop discrimination against his race. His approach to stopping racism has been observed in many of the songs that he had written. He wrote songs to break his racial barriers and transform the medium into art. His views against people criticizing his race have been strong (Anton). He was of the opinion that racism was far beyond his understanding. He believed that all individuals are the same and that he had a good way to prove that. He said that he had played in concerts in many countries and that everyone usually cried, laughed, fainted, and went hysterical at the same places in his shows, which meant that they all had commonalities and were the same.

In an interview, he mentioned how he hated ignorance, similar to the prejudice issue in America. He told the interviewer how he would appreciate the love of a color-blind and wished he could bring that love to America. He repeated that it was ignorance that he was prejudiced against. He confirmed in the interview that he wasn't a prejudiced person. He implied people to look closer at God and his creation such as to avoid discriminating any of his created races. He shared his views on how he felt about the human body, how the organs and the blood differed in color, how all the performed differently in the human body, and how well their collaboration was. He said, "And if this can happen to the human body, why can't we do it as people?" (Anonymous)

His approach to writing against discrimination, which he and any other race faced, can be observed in various songs. In the song called "Black or White" Michael wrote, "I said if you're thinking of being my brother it doesn't matter if you're black or white" and "Don't tell me you agree with me when I saw you kicking dirt in my eye." Through these lyrics, he motivated his listeners that being friends and

brothers doesn't require a person to be of any specific or dominant race and that those who disagree with his opinion don't need to lie.

He described in his interview how he communicated his feelings against racism through his songs, his dance, and his art as there were no other public forums where such views could be expressed. He explained how he would teach the world to be wise if the politicians didn't make any appropriate decision on this case. He told the interview about how a peacock has received praise and honor for its illustrious, charming beauty. It is the only animal that incorporates all colors. He got motivated by the beauty of the peacock and said, "We, like the peacock, try to integrate all races into one through the love of music." He reckoned that people should act more like peacocks, and he could work to bring all races together through his music. Another one of his quotes about race depicts his strong views, "It doesn't matter which blood or race or creed or color an individual belongs to. Love is love, and it breaks all boundaries, and you just see it right away." He meant that love is far from the consideration of who is white and who is black. It symbolizes peace between people of various races and breaks every bond. Michael Jackson supported his ideas by saying "(Racism) it is cruelty, it's ugly, and I hate it." and "If you are black, white, or Arab, we are all the same. I love all races equally, and I love all people of the world." It was not just a single time that Michael Jackson reported and defied the discrimination among races. Being a victim of these circumstances at a very young age, Michael Jackson served to eradicate this issue from the world through his career in music. As a songwriter, he displayed great courage in writing about some of the world's most crucial issues, such as racism, which most songwriters would never have the courage to do. He had been very open about his opinions and said he loved his heritage and his kindness and was proud to be black. He took the matter personally and hoped a day would come when he and others of his kind were portrayed fairly in front of the world. In his song "Can You Feel It" he wrote: "All the colors of the world should love each other wholeheartedly." Again and again, he wrote his songs to inspire the world with the thought of accepting each race of the world and loving each other so that there is no prejudice left in the world. In another one of his songs called 'They Don't Care About Us,' he wrote about how his race was the one that had the least consideration of the world. He hated the idea of being discriminated against just because he belonged to a race that was looked down upon by the whites (Anton). The reason that he so strongly condemned the idea of racism was that he had suffered through it in his youth when his skin color was still brown. He knew how the words of discrimination hurt a person whom they had attacked, so he decided to lead his life in music while conveying the message of love, peace, and harmony among all races of the world. He related the situation of difference among races with a peacock, the organs, and the color of blood, and to the crowds at his concerts and said that color difference could be stopped if one looks at these examples and tries to implement equality in their lives among all races under the influence of such examples. He credited his ideas by writing about eradicating racial differences in his songs.

His ideas motivated the blacks specifically, and they soon began comparing him to Barack Obama. This had to be the greatest compliment he could receive because both of them served as racial Harmonists and integrationists (Toure). Also, since both of these personalities worked to attain the highest peaks of success and did not let race keep them from doing so, both of them could be

compared with each other. Both of them were African-American males and worked against race inequality. Both Barack Obama and Michael Jackson are considered moral heroes among the black race. Michael Jackson said in an interview, "Together we can stop racism and prejudice. It's our only hope. Without hope, we are lost."

From the above discussion, it can be said that Michael Jackson was undoubtedly a symbol of peace, love, and harmony who worked to eradicate the thought of race inequality from this world. He spread his views and opinions to his fans and the world through his songs, which he used to write. Time and again, he confirmed how color difference can only prove to bring them doom and how every person has the right to be treated fairly regardless of what race he/she belongs to. Most of his songs that have been mentioned in the study above had lyrics, which promoted his beliefs that all races are equal. He spread his thoughts through his songs and confirmed in interviews how he hated the concept of prejudice and ignorance. He had explained that he loved to maintain peace and being of the same race, which had been discriminated against greatly, he knows what it feels like to be ignored and differentiated from the rest of the world. Hence, Michael Jackson has proven by writing in his songs that no person is superior to another and that there should be no such thing as racism.

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