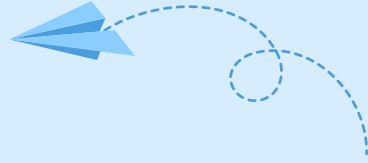




EssaysMasters.com



Song Analysis Paper: They Don't Care About Us

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation



| Song Analysis Paper: They Don't Care About Us

Any artwork, regardless of the kind of art that it represents, is a personalized interpretation of reality that emphasizes significant social issues through the author's individual perception. The artists have can utilize a lot of tools for integrating their personal experiences into a broader social context and for formulating topical messages that they want to express. Singing belongs to one of the most impressive kinds of art, as it unites numerous artistic elements, including narration, sounds and images. Harmonious interplaying between these elements creates a powerful emotional effect on the human subconscious, thus making a song to be the most substantial method of accentuating and emphasizing diverse topics and issues. The song "They Don't Care about Us" by Michael Jackson is a remarkable example of a song that has a broad context of revealing social discrimination (Vevo, 2009). This paper seeks to analyze the song by utilizing sociological concepts such as sociological imagination, cultural identity and socialization in order to look at the core of the problem that Michael Jackson brings attention to.

At first sight, the song seems to be rather private and reminiscent of the singer's monolog that presents his individual story and expresses his personal feelings. Despite the fact that the song is narrated from the first person perspective, it is quite easy to understand that Michael Jackson speaks for the whole black community, which is becomes evident after applying the concept of sociological imagination (Giddens et al., n.d.). Thus, each stanza, that seems to be the flow of thoughts, reveals the awful quality of life of the members of the black community and their suffering

of being hated and despised by the white American majority. First listening of the song brings the feeling of intense the artist's indignation about this devaluating and oppressing of the black community, and the later lyrics confirm such an impression:

"Beat me, hate me...

I'm tired of bein' the victim of hate...." (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 13, 28)

The last line is repetitive, and it appears again further in the text with small variations, as though underlining the reason for the existing situation, implying that unfair treatment by the white majority creates numerous limitations in the life of black people. A decent level and quality of education and work are the primary and elementary opportunities that the members of the black community are often deprived of. Because of this, they are often forced to live in poverty or to find alternative ways of earning, which are not always legitimate. Such a situation results in an increase in the crime rate within the black community. What is more sorrowful is that children who are born and brought up in such an environment unwillingly become witnesses of the low social culture and profound despair of their parents, peers, friends, etc. In order to change their lives they should undergo a long-term and exhausted struggle with both the white society and with their native community's stereotypes as well as with themselves, because the existing stratification changes people, mostly those who are already oppressed. Despite the fact that these aspects are not noted directly, an attentive listener can easily locate them between the following lines:

"Tell me what has become of my rights

Am I invisible because you ignore me?" (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 45 - 46)

Moreover, in the fifth stanza, Michael Jackson mentions his family alongside with expressing his complaints on the brutality, making an accent on the violated process of socialization of black children who have little to no interaction with agents of socialization who could provide them with the set of living rules that are appropriate in the society (Giddens et al., n.d.). Thus, members of such communities sometimes become involved in criminal activities due to their oppressed existence and are affected by the detrimental aftermaths of such a behavior. Being surrounded by such a hostile environment, they have little opportunities to choose another path than their fellow African Americans:

"They're throwing me in a class with a bad name" (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 49)

This "bad name" is inextricably linked to the social aspects that influence a black person from the early childhood and transmit throughout generations. This also applies to the white majority that upholds and transfers their systems of treatment of the black culture in the same way through generations. The fact that Michael Jackson addresses the historical figures of Martin Luther and Roosevelt confirms the abovementioned assertions. Moreover, it emphasizes the acuteness of the issue at the times when these persons lived. Thus, in such a manner the artist juxtaposes the past situation to nowadays, as if pointing out that it does not break the deadlock:

"Your proclamation promised me free liberty, now
I'm tired of bein' the victim of shame" (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 47-48)



Cultural identity is another sociological concept which Michael Jackson pays attention to in this song. He expresses his incomprehension of how people born in a single country could be so hostile to each other and how one can nation divide itself into stratum according to a person's skin's color:

"I can't believe this is the land from which I came" (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 50)

By accentuating such phrases as "you're rapin' me off my pride", "everybody do me" the artist emphasizes the oppression and slavery, which have a link to the strong dependence on the other, supreme social stratum and the feelings related to such a position (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 18, 29). It is quite evident that being navigated by the vision of others, finding of an individual identity is a very complicated and almost unattainable task, which definitely obstructs the development of a community's cultural identity. It is the primary block that sentences any race to rejection by another one. Michael Jackson understands this and expresses it by the means of numerous rejections of the oppression:

"You can never break me..,

You can never kill me...,

You can never trash me..." (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 14, 16, 60, 62)

Following the stereotypes, people are not used to pondering about their roots and, which is more, analyzing the aftermaths that preserve the various long-term mistreatments, false history and other injustices such as like segregation. The song of Michael Jackson provides the auditory



with substantial understanding of black culture and awareness of their persistent struggle, including internal aspirations as well as external protests. It is a pity that society remains unfair to the black community despite wide promoting and declaring the equality of rights and freedoms. Even on a legislative level there is a lot of law disparity. Thus, the Three Strikes Law belongs to such controversial sample of public policy initiatives. Determination of the drug offenses as prior "strikes" will cause increasing the number of sentenced the black community's offenders under the "3 Strikes" Law without any changes among the white Americans. The so-called "War on Drugs", implying business competition in what the government again indulge white persons, is the primary reason to this (The Lectric Law Library, n.d.). Michael Jackson makes an especially bright accent on the inaction of the government that he considers to be the first factor in solving the issue of segregation. The title of the song "They Don't Care about Us" seems to hint at the governors' position as well as the lines:

"Some things in life they just don't wanna see.." (A-Z Lyrics, n.d, 67)

After all, the song "They Don't Care about Us" by Michael Jackson reveals quite a painful aspect of the modern American society. Describing the feelings and sufferings of the black community, the artist emphasized the crucial effects of the situation, which had been deeply rooted in the minds of both black and white identities. Applying the sociological concepts of cultural identities and socialization helps to understand Michael Jackson's core message, which asserts that the closed circle of suffering could be changed by the means of caring one people about the others regardless of the color of their skin.