

Final Project:

Mixing Justice

Junqing Peng

Arizona State University

JUS105: Intro to Justice Studies

Mr. Andrew Brown

April 28, 2021

My Playlist

1. *They Do Not Care About Us (1996)* by Michael Jackson
2. *Earth Song (1995)* by Michael Jackson
3. *Heal the World (1995)* by Michael Jackson
4. *Black or white (1991)* by Michael Jackson
5. *I'm a African (2000)* by Dead Prez
6. *Police State (2000)* by Dead Prez

Justice Behind Songs

Music is one of the representations of human culture. People can get inspiration and motivation from the music they listen to, which is the main reason why people love music so much. Moreover, there are some songs which have some just ideas, making a huge difference to the society. These songs are the reflection of society and it takes courage for the writer to publish songs to fight for the right of each person at that time. However, these songs are one of the foundations for society to progress by balancing different rights and eliminate injustice and inequality, showing that everyone should be treated equally.

In history, many people have treated inequality and they were suffered from other people and society, especially black people. Throughout history, black people faced different kinds of injustice. They were slaves and people bought and sold black people during the mid-15th century to late 19th century, also known as “The Atlantic Slave Trade”. Until now, many people are still fighting for the right of black people because of the senseless killing of George Floyd. “When you try so hard to put faith in this system, a system that you know isn't designed for you, when you constantly seek justice by lawful means and you can't get it, you begin to take the law into your own hands.” (BBC, 2020) In addition, there were some “rules” for black people such as prohibiting blacks from shopping in some stores and no right to vote. Thus, black people are facing many inequalities in history.

Many songs are written for black people. *They Do Not Care About Us* is one of them. This song talks about the mistreatment of black people. At that time, there was a black person who drove at an excessive speed and was pulled over by four white traffic cops. When the cops realized that the driver was a black person, they beat up the drivers. When other people saw it, they thought these cops must be punished. However, the driver did not have enough money to hire a lawyer whereas these four cops hired the best lawyer to defend themselves, resulting in being acquitted of the charge of the four cops. This leads to the Los Angeles riot. In the end, four cops were fired and the black man was awarded in damage. Some parts of the story falsified by the media because some people were deliberately playing up racist sentiments.

Because of that, *They Do Not Care About Us* was created and this song strongly condemns racial discrimination. At beginning of this song, Michael used some bad phrases such as “skinhead” and “deadhead” to describe the people who have racial discrimination, which shows the madness to these people. In the middle of the song, he wrote: “I have a wife and two children who love me. I am a victim of police brutality, now. I’m tired of being the victim of hate”, which was for the driver. Black people also have the right to live on this planet and they also have a family. Thus, there are no reasons for them to be treated differently because they are an essential part of society. He also wrote “Tell me what has become of my rights. Am I invisible because you ignore me? I can believe this is the land from which I came.” Thus, Michael makes people feel that the driver has no right in this world because his right was taken away by society.

Michael Jackson was not the only singer fighting for the right of black people. Dead Prez is a hip-hop duo and most of their songs are focusing on the justice of black people. *I’m an African* is one of their songs. This song talks about a person who raises in the ghetto and becomes a slave, who is longing for freedom. In their songs, they keep repeating “I am

African” and become louder and louder. Thus, we can see that they are proud to be African and they show their love to their motherland. They have another song called *Police State*. This song talks about some black males who spent a third of their lives in jail because the world is controlled by white people. Women could not be respected and people never got paid by work. Black people had no right and there was not just society. This kind of situation is called police state by them.

From these songs, black people were facing racial challenges and it was hard to have their rights. This world is built by different kinds of people and each person plays an important role to make the world even better. Not only blacks but all people on the planet should also be respected and have their rights. If the rights could not be balanced, the society will be full of chaos and slow down the development of the society. Thus, every person should have equal rights no matter where he from, which color he has, or which language he speaks. Therefore, that is the fundamental element of a just society.

However, balancing human rights is not enough. Our nature is full of different kinds of animals and plants. Nature should also have its rights.

Since global warming is continuously happening around our earth, it will affect many species, which will play a negative impact on the ecosystem. Increased temperature will cause an increase in the rate of evaporation in water, leading to less water for animals to drink. For example, elephants have to walk for a long period to get water and some of them die because of lack of water. This is just one of the effects of global warming. Global warming affects all kinds of things in the ecosystem such as weather, ocean, volcano, and human. These things are deeply linked to each other which means that if one of them makes the change, it will cause chain effects which means everything in the ecosystem would like to change. Global warming is a huge challenge for our ecosystem. The animal will have no place to live and reproduce, resulting in extinction; More and more forest will be burnt

because high-temperature causes fire; Different animals have to adapt to change in the surrounding. Thus, recovering our ecosystem is the most important thing to do right now.

Earth Song by Michael Jackson let more people know the importance of environmental protection. "What about sunrise? What about rain? What about yesterday? What about the sea? What about crying whales..." Most of the lyrics are made by the questions, which will attract people's attention and make people think deeply. The lyrics cover most environmental issues and people will have a better understanding of environmental challenges. From the sea and weather to people and children, it reminds people to think that: "What have we done to the world? The animals are dying and our ecosystem is breaking." The combination of melody and lyrics of the song will make people feel sad. Since then, more and more people will take part in protecting the environment because they realize the importance of it. "Anyway, the repetition is a great appeal to human emotion and it may provoke different reactions: shame, guilt, remorse, sympathy..." (Zambrotta, 2020) Accordingly, that makes this song be one of the greatest songs in human history.

Many volunteers take part in saving different animals. Many animals get hurt or live without food and water. These volunteers will save animals' life and help them recover. Volunteers always say that: "When you look at them, they will look at you. It seems that there is a connection between you and animals. They will understand you." It is very meaningful to save animals and our ecosystem. We should respect every life on earth because they are part of the planet. Just watching the animals getting better is one of the most wonderful things in my life.

Thus, it is essential to recover the ecosystem and humans will have a lot of work to do. We need to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is the main cause of global warming. One of the key solutions to this is to reduce the amount of fossil fuel

being burnt. Burning fossil fuel is one of the key methods for us to get energy so a huge amount of fossil fuel will be burnt every single day. We need to start to use different renewable energy such as wind and sun because these are free and there are no negative effects on the environment. New types of technology could be used to put these renewable energies into good use. For example, there is an electric vehicle that uses electricity instead of gasoline, prevent carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere. I encourage more and more creators will make products that will change the world. As people, we also need to take part in recovering the ecosystem. “Finally, humanity’s dominance of Earth means that we cannot escape responsibility for managing the planet. Our activities are causing rapid, novel, and substantial changes to Earth’s ecosystems.” (Vitousek, 1997, p.499) We can reduce the amount of trash, take public transportation, use less electricity, and so on. Although each person makes a very small difference, all the people will make a huge difference to the world we live in.

Hence, equality is not only belonging to the human, but it is also belonging to everything on this planet. Every living has its meaning to this world. Every tree, every flower, every animal, every person is meaningful to this planet. They are an important part of this planet and they depend on each other. The animal needs plants to get food and oxygen and plants need the animal to help them to breed. “But our future survival is predicated upon our ability to relate within equality.” (Lorde, 2021, p.6) Thus, these forms of life should have equal rights to survive on this planet. If they are extinct, our ecosystem will become break and our planet will be in danger.

Michael Jackson’s *Heal in the world* is one of my favorite songs. This song had been regarded as “the most beautiful song in the world”. This song is about love and peace, which will give people hope and the most beautiful side of the world. In the song, first, it states that “There is a place in your heart and I know that it is love.” Thus, this is the world with love

and everything live together harmonious. In the song, he also sings that: “Make a little space. Make a better place.” It means that every creature on the planet should understand and help each other. Bring everything together is key for the animals and plants to survive on this planet. “There is a love that can not lie. Love is strong It only cares for the joyful thing.” Thus, love is one of the most powerful things in this world. I believe love can cross space and time. We can love people who have passed away and people who are in another galaxy, which makes it so unique. We can love this world and we should have the courage to make it better. This song is written for children. However, as adults, we still can feel the beauty of it.

This world is beautiful. Sometimes people could not feel the beauty of this world because they sometimes care about the value of their rights. If people can understand each other and all the different things around the world, I believe everyone will feel how amazing this world is. Since then, we will respect everything around us including every people, every plant, every animal because equality belongs to everyone and everything. In that case, true justice will be brought to this world and everything will live with love and peace. In addition, we should be thankful for everything nature gave us, including materials to manufacture, oxygen to breathe, and fresh water to drink. I believe every people believe in kindness and they have the resolution to make the world a better place for us to live in. That is true justice.

Reference

- BBC. (2020, July 16). George Floyd: What happened in the final moments of his life. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52861726>.
- Zambrotta, L. (2020, April 24). Earth Song (2. analysis). words and music and stories. <https://wordsmusicandstories.wordpress.com/2020/04/24/%F0%9F%8E%B6-earth-song-%F0%9F%8E%B6-2-analysis/>.
- Lorde, A. (2021). Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference. Campus Wars,

191–198. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429038556-22> p.6

Vitousek, P. M. (1997). Human Domination of Earth's Ecosystem.

