

“Not Like Us” is Kendrick Lamar’s fourth diss track directed at Drake, released on the evening of May 4, 2024, less than 24 hours after the release of “meet the grahams,” his third dedicated diss. On the track, Kendrick avenges the West Coast for Drake’s controversial use of 2Pac and Snoop Dogg A.I. vocals on his song “Taylor Made Freestyle,” Drake’s second diss released via Instagram on April 19. It was removed shortly thereafter because of a cease-and-desist from the estate of the late Tupac Shakur.

Kendrick raps over a bouncy Mustard-produced beat which, typical of Mustard’s style, is inspired by hyphy—a genre of hip-hop popularized in Northern California’s Bay Area. In a June 2024 interview with *Billboard*, Mustard revealed that he heard the final mix when the song was released, the beat took him 30 minutes to make, and he talked about the inspiration for his production:

When I was making it, I was, in the back of my head, is: What would Dr. Dre do if Lil Jon was in the studio and they was collabin' on the beat? That was my thought process.

Kendrick’s zany vocal inflections and fast flows are reminiscent of Bay Area legend E-40, a personal favorite of his who was shouted out on October 2012’s “Money Trees:”

Dreams of livin' life like rappers do (Like rappers do, like rappers do)
Bump that new E-40 after school (Way after school, way after school)

Among other disses, notably calling Drake a snitch and culture vulture, Kendrick doubles down on prior allegations made against Drake of sexual deviancy. This time, he outright uses the term “certified pedophile” as a clever play on Drake’s September 2021 album *Certified Lover Boy*.

The cover art features what appears to be an aerial view of Drake’s mansion at Park Lane Circle in Toronto, Canada. Park Lane Circle is a “Toronto oasis where celebrities love to build extremely lavish mansions.” The thumbnail, edited in a way that closely resembles the sex offender registry which pinpoints convicted offenders’ residencies, is continuing the thread of allegations made by Kendrick Lamar that Drake is a sexual predator. It insinuates that Drake’s mansion, nicknamed “The Embassy,” is a hub for illegal sexual activity.

The track was first teased on Twitter by two people: one of Kendrick’s associates and Anthony “Top Dawg” Tiffith, founder of TDE, the label and collective that Kendrick belonged to before launching pgLang. The first tweet stated that “[Kendrick]’s nowhere near done.” Top Dawg then posted, “Dot, I see dead people 🧟,” foreshadowing the opening line of the song, which dropped approximately two hours later.

“Not Like Us” became a massively successful hit song both domestically and internationally, breaking several records. On May 7, 2024, it broke the record for most single-day Spotify streams for a hip-hop song in the US, surpassing Drake & Lil Baby’s September 2021 collaboration, “Girls Want Girls,” which hit a peak of 6.6 million. The next day, it was reported to have broken the global record, beating out Drake’s single-day peak of 11.85 million with September 2021’s “Champagne Poetry.” On May 13, *Billboard* reported that the song would debut at the top of the Hot 100, making it Kendrick’s fourth #1 hit and first #1 debut in his home country. It did so with the chart’s release the next day, along with the news that it had broken the record for fastest hip-hop song to reach 100 million Spotify streams, surpassing Drake’s January 2018 single, “God’s Plan.” May 15 saw the song breaking the record for most Spotify streams in a week in the 2020s, surpassing Taylor Swift & Post Malone’s “Fortnight” from April 2024.

The first live performance of “Not Like Us” took place at Kendrick’s Juneteenth show *The Pop Out: Ken & Friends* at the Kia Forum in Inglewood, California on June 19, 2024. The show was streamed worldwide through Amazon Prime and Kendrick performed “Not Like Us” multiple times to close the show as the stage filled with fellow West Coast representatives such as Mustard, YG, DeMar DeRozan, and Russell Westbrook, among others. The music video was shot in Kendrick’s hometown of Compton, California on June 22 and it premiered on July 4th.

According to the Genius community's end of the year rankings, "Not Like Us" was voted as the best song of 2024. At the 2025 GRAMMYs, "Not Like Us" won the prestigious Song of the Year and Record of the Year Grammy Awards along with wins in the categories of Best Rap Song, Best Rap Performance, and Best Music Video—sweeping all of its nominated categories. In January 2025, Drake sued Universal Music Group for basically promoting "Not Like Us" and its malicious claims. During his anticipated Super Bowl LIX Halftime Show performance in New Orleans the following month, Kendrick addressed the lawsuit by saying "I wanna perform they favorite song, but you know they love to sue" as a tease before he performed the first verse and chorus of "Not Like Us" towards the end of his set.

In "Kendrick Lamar's Inner Drive," a Lamar interview with SZA in the October 21, 2024 *Harper's Bazaar*, SZA engages this song directly, asking "What does 'Not Like Us' mean to you?," to which Lamar responds:

Not like us? Not like us is the energy of who I am, the type of man I represent. Now, if you identify with the man that I represent [...] This man has morals, he has values, he believes in something, he stands on something. He's not pandering. He's a man who can recognize his mistakes and not be afraid to share the mistakes and can dig deep down into fear-based ideologies or experiences to be able to express them without feeling like he's less of a man. If I'm thinking of "Not Like Us," I'm thinking of me and whoever identifies with that.