

= They Don 't Care About Us =

" They Don 't Care About Us " is the fourth single from Michael Jackson 's album HIStory : Past , Present and Future , Book I , released on March 31 , 1996 . The song remains one of the most controversial pieces Jackson ever composed . In the US , media scrutiny surrounding allegations of antisemitic lyrics were the catalyst for Jackson issuing multiple apologies and re @-@ recording the song with altered lyrics . The singer countered allegations of antisemitism , arguing that reviews had misinterpreted the context of the song , either unintentionally or deliberately . The song was also covered by Christian alternative metal band P.O.D. in 1998 as a bonus track on the special edition version of their album , The Fundamental Elements of Southtown . The album contains an uncensored version of the song . Christian stores removed the album when the special edition came out because of the controversial lyrics including " Jew me " and " Kike me . "

The song was accompanied by two music videos directed by Spike Lee . The first was shot in two locations in Brazil , in Pelourinho , the historic city centre of Salvador , and in a favela of Rio de Janeiro called Dona Marta , where the state authorities had tried to ban all production over fears the video would damage their image , the area and prospects of Rio de Janeiro staging the 2004 Olympics . Still , the residents of the area were happy to see the singer , hoping their problems would be made visible to a wider audience . The second video was shot in a prison and contained video footage of multiple references to human rights abuses .

Commercially , the song became a top ten hit in all European countries and number one in Germany for three weeks . In the US , radio stations were reluctant to play the controversial composition ; it , however , managed to peak at number 30 on the Billboard Hot 100 .

The song was remixed with parts of songs such as " Privacy " (from the album Invincible) and " Tabloid Junkie " , and released on the Immortal album , in November , 2011 .

The song was performed during Jackson 's third and final concert series , the HIStory World Tour which ran from 1996 to 1997 as part of a medley with " Scream " and " In the Closet " . The song was set to be performed on Jackson 's This Is It comeback concert series at The O2 Arena in London from July 2009 to March 2010 but the shows were ultimately cancelled due to his sudden death on June 25 , 2009 .

= = Music and other commentary = =

The song begins with a child chanting , " Enough is enough of this garbage ! " and someone else helps sing the chorus ? " All I wanna say is that they don 't really care about us " . According to the sheet music published on Musicnotes.com by Alfred Music Publishing " They Don 't Care About Us " is played in the key of D minor and the track 's time signature is common time . The song , which is cited as being a pop song , has a moderately slow tempo of 88 beats per minute . Instruments used include a piano and guitar . Jon Pareles stated that Jackson was calling himself " a victim of police brutality " and a " victim of hate " . He continued , " A listener might wonder just who ' Us ' is supposed to be ... To make the songs lodge in the ear , Jackson uses elementary singsong melodies ? a ' nyah , nyah ' two @-@ note motif in ' They Don 't Care About Us ' ... and he comes up with all kinds of surprises in the arrangements " .

James Hunter of Rolling Stone magazine noted that musically , Jackson was no longer trying to hide any eccentricities he had , he expressed the opinion that in " They Don 't Care About Us " , the pop musician sounded more embattled than ever . Jim Farber of New York Daily News said that Jackson " snarled " while singing , that the song " clicked " and has an " original clattering rhythm " . The review of HIStory in The Washington Times noted of " They Don 't Care About Us " : " [it] follows fast , inviting more pathos ? and more controversy . With haunting clapping and a police scanner in the background " . The Sacramento Bee described it as a " looped reggae @-@ lite dance beat " .

The song gained renewed attention and relevance due to its use during Black Lives Matter protests in 2014 and 2015 .

= = Chart performance = =

In the UK , it peaked at number four and stayed on the chart for three months . The song found particular success in Europe , peaking within the top ten in all countries . European highlights came in Austria , Switzerland , France , Belgium and Sweden , in these countries the song became a top five hit and stayed in their respective charts for a minimum of 21 weeks . The song reached the top of the charts for three weeks in Germany and stayed a full 30 weeks in the survey . It is the longest consecutive chart run of a Michael Jackson song in the German charts . The lyrical controversy surrounding " They Don 't Care About Us " brought partial commercial disappointment in the US ; radio stations were reluctant to play the song . It peaked at number 30 on the US Billboard Hot 100 chart , falling short of the record breaking success of the two previous singles " Scream / Childhood " and " You Are Not Alone " , yet the song peaked at number 10 on the US Billboard Hot R & B Singles chart .

= = Music videos = =

Producing the first video proved to be a difficult task for Jackson . State authorities unsuccessfully tried to ban the singer filming in Salvador (Pelourinho) and in Rio de Janeiro . Officials in the state of Rio feared images of poverty might affect tourism and accused Jackson of exploiting the poor . Ronaldo Cezar Coelho , the state secretary for Industry , Commerce and Tourism demanded editing rights over the finished product , stating , " I don 't see why we should have to facilitate films that will contribute nothing to all our efforts to rehabilitate Rio 's image " . Some were concerned that scenes of poverty and human rights abuses would affect their chances of hosting the Olympics in 2004 . Others supported Jackson 's wish to highlight the problems of the region , arguing that the government were embarrassed by their own failings .

A judge banned all filming but this ruling was overturned by an injunction . Although officials were angry , the residents were not and Jackson was surrounded by crowds of enthusiastic onlookers during filming . One woman managed to push through security to hug Jackson who continued dancing while hugging her . Another woman appeared and hugged him from behind . He then fell to the ground as police pulled the two women off him and escorted them away . After the director helped Jackson get up off the street , he continued to sing and dance . This incident made it into the music video . 1 @, @ 500 policemen and 50 residents acting as security guards effectively sealed off the Dona Marta favela . Some residents and officials found it offensive that Jackson 's production team had negotiated with drug dealers in order to gain permission to film in one of the city 's shantytowns .

The music video was directed by Spike Lee . Asked why he chose Lee to direct the video , Jackson responded , " ' They Don 't Care About Us ' has an edge , and Spike Lee had approached me . It 's a public awareness song and that 's what he is all about . It 's a protest kind of song ... and I think he was perfect for it " .

Jackson also collaborated with 200 members of the cultural group Olodum , who " swayed to the heavy beat of Salvador 's ' samba @-@ reggae ' music " . The media interest surrounding the music video exposed Olodum to 140 countries around the world . It brought them worldwide fame and increased their credibility in Brazil . At the beginning of the video , a Brazilian woman says " Michael , eles não ligam pra gente " which means " Michael , they don 't care about us " .

Speaking of the music video , in The New Brazilian Cinema , Lúcia Nagib observed :

When Michael Jackson decided to shoot his new music video in a favela of Rio de Janeiro ... he used the favela people as extras in a visual super @-@ spectacle ... All the while there is a vaguely political appeal in there ... The interesting aspect of Michael Jackson 's strategy is the efficiency with which it gives visibility to poverty and social problems in countries like Brazil without resorting to traditional political discourse . The problematic aspect is that it does not entail a real intervention in that poverty .

In 2009 , Billboard described the area as " now a model for social development " and claimed that Jackson 's influence was partially responsible for this improvement .

For the first time in his career , Jackson made a second music video for a single . This second version was filmed in a prison with cell mates ; in the video Jackson is seen handcuffed . It also contains real footage of police attacking African Americans , the military crackdown of the protest in the Tiananmen Square , the Ku Klux Klan , war crimes , genocide , execution , martial law , and other human rights abuses .

The first music video of the song appears on the box set Visionary : The Video Singles , and the video albums HIStory on Film , Volume II and Vision ; the latter additionally includes the prison version .

The voice intro , " Michael , Michael , eles não ligam pra gente " (portuguese for " they don 't care about us ") , was recorded by Angélica Vieira , producer of Manhattan Connection .

= = Cover versions = =

In 2009 , Northern Kings covered the song as bonus track for on their 2008 album Rethroned .

In 2012 , Italian jazz trumpeter Enrico Rava released a version on his tribute album Rava on the Dance Floor .

In 2014 , 2Cellos released a cover of the song on their album Celloverse .

In 2014 , a Nigerian , King A @-@ Maz , used the song to protest the Nigerian government 's nonchalance concerning the Boko Haram carnage going on at that time . The single was uploaded to YouTube , along with amateur footage , which caused a lot of controversy due to the newspaper clippings used in the footage .

The Tupac Shakur album entitled Better Dayz (2002) features a song named " They Don 't Give a Fuck About Us " . With different lyrics , the song contained a similar theme and musical composition style . Tupac discusses the trials and tribulations of the black and working class communities , referring to " they " as the middle class , media , U.S. that did not understand him .

= = 2009 rehearsal footage = =

A short video clip released after Jackson 's death of the June 23 , 2009 rehearsal for the This Is It concert series shows Jackson performing the song as the main song in a medley with parts of " HIStory " song as well as " Why You Wanna Trip On Me " and " She Drives Me Wild " from Dangerous .

= = Dispute regarding lyrics and context = =

The New York Times reported the song contained racist and anti @-@ Semitic content on June 15 , 1995 , just a day before the album 's release . The publication highlighted the lyrics , " Jew me , sue me , everybody do me / Kick me , kike me , don 't you black or white me . " Jackson responded directly to the publication , stating :

When questioned further about the lyrics on the ABC News program Prime Time Live , Jackson stated , " It 's not anti @-@ Semitic because I 'm not a racist person ... I could never be a racist . I love all races . " The singer also claimed that some of his closest employees and friends were Jewish . That same day , Jackson received support from his manager and record label , who described the lyrics as " brilliant " , that they were about opposition to prejudice and taken out of context . The following day , two leading members of the Jewish community stated that Jackson 's attempt to make a song critical of discrimination had backfired . They expressed the opinion that the lyrics used were unsuitable for a teenage audience that might not understand the song 's context , adding that the song was too ambiguous for some listeners to understand . They accepted that Jackson meant well and suggested that the entertainer write an explanation in the album booklet .

On June 17 , Jackson issued another public apology for his choice of words . He promised that future copies of the album would include an apology . By this point , however , two million copies of the record had already been shipped . The singer concluded , " I just want you all to know how strongly I am committed to tolerance , peace and love , and I apologize to anyone who might have

been hurt . " The next day , in his review of HIStory , Jon Pareles of The New York Times alleged , " In ... ' They Don 't Care About Us ' , he gives the lie to his entire catalogue of brotherhood anthems with a burst of anti @-@ Semitism . "

On June 21 , Patrick Macdonald of The Seattle Times criticized Jackson , stating , " He may have lived a sheltered life , but there really is no excuse for using terms like ' Jew me ' and ' kike ' in a pop song , unless you make it clear you are denouncing such terms , and do so in an artful way . " Two days later , Jackson decided , despite the cost incurred , he would return to the studio and alter the offending wording on future copies of the album ; " Jew me " and " Kike me " would be substituted with " do me " and " strike me " . The music video and some copies of the album still carry the original words , but with loud , abstract noises partially drowning them out . He reiterated his acceptance that the song was offensive to some . Spike Lee claimed there was some kind of double standard in the music industry . " While the New York Times asserted the use of racial slurs in " They Don 't Care About Us " , they were silent on other racial slurs in the album . The Notorious B.I.G. says " nigga " on " This Time Around , " another song on the HIStory album , but it did not attract media attention , as well as , many years before , use in lyrics of word " nigger " by John Lennon .

= = Charts = =

= = = Certifications = = =

= = = Chart procession and succession = = =

= = Track listing = =

= = = U.S. and Japan maxi single = = =

= = = U.S. CD Single = = =

= = = UK single = = =

= = = Visionary single = = =

CD side

" They Don 't Care About Us " (LP Edit) ? 4 : 10

" They Don 't Care About Us " (Love to Infinity 's Walk in the Park Mix) ? 7 : 19

DVD side

" They Don 't Care About Us " (LP Edit) ? 4 : 10

" They Don 't Care About Us " (Love to Infinity 's Walk in the Park Mix) ? 7 : 19

" They Don 't Care About Us " (Music Video # 1 ? in Brazil with Olodum music group) (Video) ? 7 : 09

= = = US 7 " Inch Single : Epic ? 34 78264 = = =

" They Don 't Care About Us " - 4 : 43

" Rock With You " (Frankie Knuckles Radio Mix) - 3 : 47

= = Personnel = =

Michael Jackson : written by , solo vocals , percussion

Trevor Rabin : guitar (background)