

= Thriller (viral video) =

Thriller is a viral video featuring the CPDRC Dancing Inmates of a high @-@ security penitentiary . In 2007 , the inmates of Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (CPDRC) , a maximum security prison in Cebu , the Philippines , imitated the zombie dance featured in the music video of Michael Jackson 's " Thriller " . The footage , uploaded onto video @-@ sharing website YouTube , became a viral video . The idea behind the dance came from the prison 's chief , Byron F. Garcia . Garcia first conceived the idea of exercising as an enjoyable way of keeping the prisoners mentally and physically fit . Music was then added to provide additional motivation . The convicts marched and danced to several songs , including " In the Navy " and " Y.M.C.A. " by the Village People .

Garcia posted the prisoners ' dance regimes onto the internet in April 2007 . The most popular of the presentations was their Thriller performance . The video showed over 1 @, @ 500 male inmates emulating Michael Jackson 's dance moves from the original Thriller short film . Jackson fan Crisanto Nierre played the role of the pop star , with the openly gay former pizza chef Wenjiel Resane playing his girlfriend . The video became one of the most viewed on the internet , receiving 300 @, @ 000 views per day at its peak . As of December 27 , 2014 , the Thriller viral video has received over 54 million reported views . The clip also garnered complaints , with one professor stating that the dancing does not rehabilitate CPDRC inmates . The prison and its officers faced allegations of prisoner abuse , claims which both the officers and inmates denied .

The prisoners have performed numerous other songs , including " Radio Ga Ga " , " Together in Electric Dreams " , " Holding Out for a Hero " , and several songs from Sister Act . One of their performances involves the inmates holding portraits of figures such as the Dalai Lama , Pope John Paul II and Mahatma Gandhi . As a result of the prisoners ' internet fame , many visitors come to CPDRC to view the monthly performances held by the convicts . Their presentations are seen from viewing platforms surrounding the exercise yard . At the jail , visitors can have their pictures taken with the inmates . They can also buy souvenir prison shirts .

= = Background = =

I hope that all the people who see us will be happy in knowing that we , despite being prisoners , we were able to do this . Before the dancing , our problems were really heavy to bear . Dancing takes our minds away from our problems . Our bodies became more healthy . As for the judges , they may be impressed with us , seeing that we are being rehabilitated and this could help our case . We are being rehabilitated in a good way .

? Crisanto Nierre , inmate who played Michael Jackson

Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center is a maximum security prison in Cebu , in the Cebu Province of the Philippines . The center is run by Byron F. Garcia , and its inmates are either facing trial or are serving sentences for crimes ranging from shoplifting to murder and rape . In 2007 , more than 300 of the inmates were facing murder charges . Garcia initiated the idea of exercising as an enjoyable way of keeping the prisoners mentally and physically fit . " While the goal is to keep the body fit in order to keep the mind fit , such may not happen if it is done in a manner deemed unpleasurable " , Garcia said . Considering music to be " the language of the soul " , Garcia added it to the prisoner 's workout regime . Garcia also wanted the music workouts to be a way in which to break down gang factions amongst prison inmates . Melita Thomeczek , the Philippine 's deputy consulate general in New York , suspected that the warden added the music in order to take detainee 's minds off of other matters . One of the first songs the prisoners worked with was Pink Floyd 's " Another Brick in the Wall " . Garcia had them march to the music as a bid to increase participation in exercise . Other early musical choices included " In the Navy " and " Y.M.C.A. " by the Village People . The Village People songs were chosen so that macho inmates " wouldn 't be offended by being asked to dance " .

For Filipinos , music and dancing is said to be a way of life . Natives of the Philippines are reported to have a tendency to " sing and dance their way out of even the most complicated situations " .

Thomeczech stated , " The Filipinos love music and they love to sing and dance . Whatever they are in a natural way , they can continue that habit in prison . " Despite other colleagues ' enthusiasm about the dancing , chief administrator Patrick Rubio of the Directorate of Operations within the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology was worried about the volume of inmates dancing , as CPDRC was undermanned . Despite inmate dancing not being prohibited by the center 's Operations Manual , Rubio thought of the dance as a disaster waiting to happen . " As a jail officer , I got worried when I saw it " , Rubio commented . The inmates were not fond of the idea either , pelting a visiting choreographer with slippers the first time he arrived at the prison . Prisoners eventually agreed to dance , but admitted that the routines took awhile to master . " It was difficult at first , but eventually we inmates got used to it " , inmate Mario Benito revealed . The program began as an experiment and , after six months , prison chiefs concluded that it was a successful one .

= = Video and response = =

In 2007 , Garcia posted several videos of his inmates ' performances on YouTube in hopes of inspiring other prisons to learn from the experience . The clips became some of the most talked about in cyberspace . The most popular of the videos was uploaded in April 2007 . It showed over 1 @, @ 500 male inmates imitating the zombie dance featured in the music video of Michael Jackson 's " Thriller " . The prisoners wore their orange jail @-@ issue jumpsuits during the performance in the jail 's exercise yard . The Los Angeles Times later commented that the dance moves were not lifted directly from the video , " but they are performed with such precision it somehow seems that they must have been " . Inmate Crisanto Nierre played the role of Michael Jackson . Nierre , who at the time was awaiting trial on drug charges , has been a fan of Jackson since he was in a dance troupe at high school . USA Today noted that his favorite Jackson tracks were " Bad " and " Smooth Criminal " . Former pizza chef Wenjiel Resane , who is gay , played the part of Jackson 's girlfriend . At the time , Resane had already been at the prison for three years , also awaiting trial on drug charges .

Forty @-@ eight hours after being uploaded onto YouTube , the video had been viewed 266 @, @ 000 times . After a week , the number of hits had risen to over one million . Within two weeks of the Thriller video being uploaded , it had been viewed by some three million YouTube users . The following week , the number had almost doubled , coming close to six million hits . On average , the clip received 300 @, @ 000 views per day at its peak . The video generated mixed reviews , with some critics claiming that Garcia forced the inmates to perform , an accusation the prisoners refuted . Several of the inmates showed devotion towards their prison chief , with as many as 20 prisoners bearing tattoos with Garcia 's name . Garcia 's concept of having prisoners dance as part of a rehabilitation program has been copied by several prisons , including jails in Quezon province and Muntinlupa . Garcia commented that the movie showed that dancing is not a cruel or unusual punishment . He claimed that his prison showed that negative inmates could be turned into positive individuals , through the concept of a " revolutionized penology " . Following Garcia 's presentation of an inmate performance at the province 's Founding Day celebrations , a donation of \$ 35 @, @ 000 was given to the prison . Each inmate received \$ 22 of the gift , deposited into a prison passbook account . The remaining money went to the Cebu province and its employees , to defray the costs of incarceration .

The prison inmates Thriller performance made it to the pages of Time ? on the international magazine ? s list of the most watchable Internet videos for 2007 . The inmates ' interpretation of the Thriller music video was ranked the fifth of 10 " most popular viral videos " of the year , or the " Web clips we couldn ' t stop watching " . The list also included appearances by Hillary Clinton , Will Ferrell and Chris Crocker for his Leave Britney Alone ! clip . Time described the convicts as " orange @-@ jumpsuited accused murderers , rapists and drug dealers " , and noted that their performance was made in " homage " to Jackson 's Thriller . The magazine stated that the viral video had been downloaded more than nine million times . (As of January 18 , 2008 , the reported views of the video have reached almost 15 million) .

Edward Latessa , professor and head of division of criminal justice at the University of Cincinnati ,

declared that the prisoners who are dancing are not being rehabilitated . Latessa stated that the prisoners may think that they are getting something out of the performances , when , in reality , they are not . He described it as having a potentially harmful effect . The professor insisted that more appropriate rehabilitation programs , like substance abuse or family reunification programs , should be implemented with as much coordination and vigor . The detention workers disagreed with the assessment , deeming the activities to be an integral part of rehabilitation . " It combines the need for physical exercise and their love to sing and dance " , Thomeczech argued . " In more ways than one , it contributes to their rehabilitation and eventual reintegration . It 's a way to put themselves together physically and probably spiritually . That 's good , isn 't it ? " . Entertainment Weekly put it on its end @-@ of @-@ the @-@ decade , " best @-@ of " list , saying , " Now that 's a ' breakout ' hit : The clip of inmates at a high @-@ security prison in the Philippines performing an intricately choreographed dance to Michael Jackson 's " Thriller " has nabbed more than 42 million views since 2007 . "

= = Aftermath = =

In late 2007 , Pinoy Big Brother : Celebrity Edition 2 scheduled a visit from some of its celebrities to the provincial jail . The celebrities danced with 1 @, @ 600 CPDRC inmates to the tune of " Rico Mambo " as part of their weekly task , set by Big Brother . The request had been made by Maria Rowena Benitez , Pinoy Big Brother production manager . The housemates were not informed of their task , but were brought to the prison in blindfolds . They were then subsequently given back their sight , with the inmates surrounding them . Beforehand , it was also announced that the Big Brother celebrity housemates would perform a concert , with the proceeds being donated to CPDRC . The concert , held inside the Pinoy Big Brother house in Manila , was attended by 100 people , who each paid P1,000 .

The CPDRC inmates have performed numerous other songs , including Queen 's " Radio Ga Ga " and several songs from Sister Act , with prisoners dressing as nuns in habits . 44 female inmates , held in a separate wing from the males , joined the men in a dance to " I Will Follow Him " . " Hail Holy Queen " , from Sister Act 2 , and the Algorithm March were also performed by the convicts and then upload onto YouTube . The inmates dance in order to help pass the time while serving their prison sentences or awaiting a trial . More than 900 of the inmates take part in the routines , with a small group of dancers at the core of each performance . Every prisoner at CPDRC , apart from the old and the infirm , has a part in the routine . Garcia directs and choreographs each of the dances . The inmates ' participation is said to be completely voluntary , with no prisoner being forced to dance . " It would be different if they are being forced to dance " , declared Rubio . " I 've never known any prisoners being forced to dance . It 's normal to dance . " The inmates have express pride at their performing success , and routinely query the viewing figures for their routines . By August 2007 , ten of the prisoners ' performances had been viewed over 100 @, @ 000 times each . In 2007 , the prisoners stated that they were to perform to Vanilla Ice 's " Ice Ice Baby " . At the time , they were also practicing Philip Oakey and Giorgio Moroder 's " Together in Electric Dreams " , a homage to the inmates ' fans .

In January 2008 , Garcia requested that the prisoners perform their Thriller routine at the annual Sinulog festival , a popular street @-@ music festival organised by the Catholic Augustinian in celebration of baby Jesus . The nine @-@ day fiesta and party is preceded by a solemn religious procession . The mayor of Cebu , Tomas Osmena , refused to permit the request , stating that the inmates could dance all they wanted in jail . " I will not allow it even if Michael Jackson joins them " , he commented . Garcia had hoped that , by allowing the inmates to be a part of the Sinulog celebrations , Cebu would showcase the success of his rehabilitation programme . " By showing these highly disciplined inmates , perhaps we might just be giving hope that Cebu is not just about the mardi gras , but rather , Cebu is about leadership and good governance . " The CPDRC inmates were expected to be tough competition for the Lumad Basakonon , a group which has won the free interpretation category of the Sinulog festival for two consecutive years .

As a result of the prisoners ' internet fame , many visitors come to CPDRC to view the monthly

performances held by the convicts . Their presentations are seen from viewing platforms surrounding the exercise yard . At the jail , visitors can have their pictures taken with the inmates . They can also buy souvenir prison shirts . A research student from The Netherlands , Anne Yzerman , attended one of the two @-@ hour shows and praised the convicts . " They are so good at dancing all the time . I was really impressed . " The CPDRC inmates dance numbers include a rendition of Bonnie Tyler 's " Holding Out for a Hero " . The performance involves the inmates holding portraits of figures such as the Dalai Lama , Pope John Paul II and Mahatma Gandhi . After Michael Jackson 's death on June 25 , 2009 , Cebu prison officials announced that the prison inmates would be recreating the Thriller routine on the following Saturday , June 27 , 2009 . On June 27 , 2009 , the tribute video was uploaded with a dance routine for " Ben " , " I 'll Be There " , and " We Are the World " .

In January 2010 , the prisoners performed " The Drill " and " They Don 't Care About Us " [filmed on professional camera] as another tribute to Jackson , and for the release of the Michael Jackson 's This Is It DVD and Blu @-@ ray disc .

In 2011 , in the Glee episode " The Sue Sylvester Shuffle " , Glee club director Will Schuester made a reference about the " Thriller " viral video to motivate the children to do a " Thriller " performance much like from the Philippine prison .