

HISTORY IS A WEAPON

Black History

by Gil Scott-Heron

I was wondering about our yesterdays,
 and starting digging through the rubble
 and to say, at least somebody went
 through a hell of a lot of trouble
 to make sure that when we looked things up
 we wouldn't fair too well
 and that we would come up with totally unreliable
 portraits of ourselves.
 But I compiled what few facts I could,
 I mean, such as they are
 to see if we could shed a little bit of light
 and this is what I got so far:
 First, white folks discovered Africa
 and they claimed it fair and square.
 Cecil Rhodes couldn't have been robbing nobody
 'cause he said there was nobody there.
 White folks brought all the civilization,
 since there wasn't none around.
 They said 'how could these folks be civilized
 when you never see nobody writing nothing down?'
 And just to prove all their suspicions,
 it didn't take too long.
 They found out there were whole groups of people
 — *in plain sight* —
 running around with no clothes on. That's right!
 The women, the men, the young and old,
 righteous white folks covered their eyes.
 So no time was spent considering the environment.
 Hell no! This here, this just wasn't civilized!
 And another way they knew the folks was backwards,
 or at least this how we were taught
 is that 'unlike the very civilized people of Europe'
 these Black groups actually fought!
 And *yes*, there was some 'rather crude implements'
 and *yes*, there was 'primitive art'
 and *yes* they were masters of hunting and fishing
 and courtesy came from the heart.
 And *yes* there was medicine, love and religion,
 inter-tribal communication by drum.
 But no paper and pencils and other utensils
 and hell, these folks never even heard of a gun.
 So this is why the colonies came
 to stabilize the land.
 Because The Dark Continent had copper and gold
 and the discovers had themselves a plan.
 They would 'discover' all the places with promise.
 You didn't need no titles or deeds.
 You could just appoint people to make everything legal,
 to sanction the trickery and greed.
 And out in the bushes if the natives got restless
 You could call that 'guerilla attack!'
 and never have to describe that somebody finally got
 wise

and decided they wanted their things back.
But still we are victims of word games,
semantics is always a bitch:
places once called under-developed and 'backwards'
are now called 'mineral rich.'
And still it seems the game goes on
with unity always just out of reach
Because Libya and Egypt used to be in Africa,
but they've been moved to the 'middle east'.
There are examples galore I assure you,
but if interpreting was left up to me
I'd be sure every time folks knew this version wasn't mine
which is why it is called 'His story'.

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