

Black History / The World

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 piece of information they had,
or at least this how we were taught
is that 'unlike the very civilized people of Europe'
these tribal units 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,
intertribal communication by drum.
But no paper and pencils and other utensils
and hell, these folks never even heard of a gun.
And this is why the colonies came
to stabilize the land.
Because the Dark Continent had copper and gold
and the discoverers 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 back in the jungle when the natives got restless
they would call that 'guerrilla attack'
and they would never describe that the folks finally got wise
and decided they would fight back.
And still we are victims of word games,
semantics is always a bitch:
places once referred to as under-developed
are now called 'mineral rich.'
And the game goes on eternally

unity kept just beyond reach
Egypt and Libya used to be in Africa,
they've been moved to the Middle East.
There are examples galore I assure you,
but if interpreting were 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'.