

Gil Scott-Heron

"Jose Campos Torres"

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I had said I wasn't going to write no more poems like
this
I had confessed to myself all along, tracer of life,
poetry trends
That awareness, consciousness, poems that screamed
of pain and the origins of pain and death had
blanketed my tablets
And therefore, my friends, brothers, sisters, in-laws,
outlaws, and besides
They already knew
But brother Torres, common ancient bloodline brother
Torres is dead
I had said I wasn't going to write no more poems like
this
I had said I wasn't going to write no more words down
about people kicking us when we're down, about racist
dogs that attack us and drive us down, drag us down
and beat us down but the dogs are in the street
The dogs are alive and the terror in our hearts has
scarcely diminished
It has scarcely brought us the comfort we suspected
The recognition of our terror and the screaming
release of that recognition
has not removed the certainty of that knowledge, how
could it
The dogs rabid foaming with the energy of their brutish
ignorance
Stride the city streets like robot gunslingers
And spread death as night lamps flash crude
reflections from gun butts and police shields
I had said I wasn't going to write no more poems like
this
But the battlefield has oozed away from the stilted
debates of semantics
beyond the questionable flexibility of primal screaming
The reality of our city, jungle streets and their kastapos
Has become an attack on home, life, family and
philosophy, total
It is beyond the question of the advantages of didactic
niggerism
The mother fucking dogs are in the street

In Houston maybe someone said Mexicans were the
new niggers
In LA maybe someone said Chicanos were the new
niggers
In Frisco maybe someone said Orientals were the new
niggers
Maybe in Philadelphia and North Carolina they decided
they didn't need no new niggers
I had said I wasn't going to write no more poems like
this
But dogs are in the streets; It's a turn around world
where things are all too quickly turned around
It was turned around so that right looked wrong; it was
turned around so that up looked down
It was turned around so that those who marched in the
streets with bibles and signs of peace became enemies
of the state and risk to national security
So that those who questioned the operations of those
in authority on the principles of justice, liberty, and
equality became the vanguard of a communist attack
It became so you couldn't call a spade a mother-
fucking spade
Brother Torres is dead, the Wilmington ten are still
incarcerated
Ed Davis, Ronald Regan, James Hunt, and Frank Rizzo
are still alive
And the dogs are in the mother-fucking street
I had said I wasn't going to write no more poems like
this
I made a mistake

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