

Gil Scott-Heron

"Message To The Messengers"

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Hey, yeah, we the same brothas from a long time ago
We was talkin' about television and doin' it on the radio
What we did was to help our generation realize
They had to get out there and get busy cause it wasn't
gonna be televised
We got respect for you rappers and the way they be
free-weighin'
But if you're gon' be teachin' folks things, make sure
you know what you're sayin'
Older folks in our neighborhood got plenty of know-how
Remember if it wasn't for them, you wouldn't be out
here now
And I ain't comin' at you with no disrespect
All I'm sayin' is that you damn well got to be correct
Because if you're gonna be speakin' for a whole
generation
And you know enough to try and handle their education
...Be sure you know the real deal about past situations,
and ain't just repeatin' what you heard on the local t.v.
stations.
Sometimes they tell lies and put 'em in a truthful
disguise.
But the truth is, that's why we said it wouldn't be
televised.
They don't know what to say to our young folk, but they
know that you do.
And if they really knew the truth, why would they tell
you????!!!
The first sign is "Peace." Tell all them gun-totin' young
brothers
that the 'man' is glad to see us out there killin' one
another!!!
We raised too much hell, when they was shootin' us
down,
So they...started poisoning our mind and tried to jerk
us all around.
And then they tell us they gotta come in and control our
situation.
They want half of us on dope and the other half in
incarceration.
If the ones they want dead ain't killed by what they

instigated,
They can...put some dope on the brother's body and
claim it was...
"drug-related."
Tell 'em "drug-related" means there don't need to be
no investigation,
Or at least that's the way they gone play it...on the local
t.v. station.
All you 9mm brothers, give 'em somethin' to think
about...
Tell 'em you heard that this is the "New Word,"
They gotta work that stuff out!!!
But somehow they feelin' the wrong way with a gun in
they hands.
They feelin' real independent but they just pullin'
contracts for 'the man.'
They will tell you it's hopeless out there on the avenue,
But if they really knew the truth, why would they tell
you???
And if they look at you like you insane,
And they...start calling you "Scarecrow" and say you
ain't got no brain
Or start...tellin' folks that you've suddenly gone lame,
Or that...white folks have finally co-opted your game,
Or worst yet, implyin' that you really don't know,
That's the same thang they said 'bout us...a long time
ago.
Young rappers, one more suggestion, before I get
outta your way.
I appreciate the respect you give to me and what
you've got to say.
I'm sayin' "Protect your community and spread that
respect around."
Tell brothers and sisters they gotta calm that bullshit
down,
Cuz we terrorizin' our old folks, and we've brought fear
into our homes,
And they ain't gotta hang out with the senior citizens,
Just tell 'em, "Dammit, leave the old folks alone!!!"
And we know who rippin' off the neighborhoods.
Tell 'em that B.S. has gotsta stop.
Tell 'em you sorry that they can't handle it out there,
but they gotta
take the crime off the block!!!
And if they look at you like they think you insane,
Or start calling you "Scarecrow," thinkin' you ain't got
no brain,
Or...start tellin' folks that you've suddenly gone lame,
Or that...white folks have suddenly co-opted your
game,
Or worst yet, sayin' that you really don't know,

That's the same thang they said 'bout me a long time ago.
And if they tell folks that you've finally lost your nerve
That's the same thang they said 'bout us, when we said, "Johannesburg!!!"

But I think you young folks need to know that...things don't go both ways.
You can't talk respect on every other song or just every other day.
What I'm speakin' on know is the raps about the women folks:
On one song, she's your African Queen and on the next one, she a joke.
And you ain't said no words that I haven't heard, but that ain't no complement.
It only insults 8 people out of 10 and questions your intelligence.
Four letter words or fours syllable words won't make you a poet,
It will only magnify how shallow you are and let ev'rybody know it.
And if they look at you like they think you're insane, Or they call you "Scarecrow," thinkin' you ain't got no brain,
Or...start tellin' folks that you've suddenly gone lame, Or that the white folks have finally co-opted your game, Or you really don't know. They said that 'bout me a long time ago.
If they finally start tellin people that you've lost your nerve
That's what they said 'bout Johannesburg!!!
You ain't insane...you have got a brain...you haven't gone lame...you have got your game!!!
Remember: KEEP THE NERVE, KEEP THE NERVE, KEEP THE NERVE, KEEP THE NERVE...WE'RE TALKIN' 'BOUT P.E.A.C.E.!!!

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