

Gil Scott-Heron

"Message To The Rappers"

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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
Make sure you know the real deal about past situations
It ain't just repeatin' what you heard on the local TV
stations
A... 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 folks, 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
brothas
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 minds tryin' to jerk us
all around
And they tell us they got to 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 put some dope on a brotha's body and claim it was drug related

Tell them drug related means there don't need to be no investigation

Or at least that's the way they're gon' play it on the local TV stations

All your 9-millimeter brothas...give them somthin' to think about

Tell them you heard that this is the new word, they got to work that stuff out

But somehow they feel in the wrong way with a gun in their hands

They feel real independent...but they just pullin' contracts for the man

Five and five 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're insane

And they start callin' you scarecrow and say you ain't got no brain

Or start tellin' folks that you suddenly gone lame

Or that white folks had finally co-opted your game

Or worse yet implying that you don't really know...

That's the same thing they said about us...a long time ago

Young rappers, one more suggestion before I get out of your way

But I appreciate the respect you give me and what you got to say

I'm sayin' protect your community and spread that respect around

Tell brothas and sistas they gotta calm that bullshit down

Cause we're terrorizin' our old folks and brought fear into our homes

And they ain't got to hang out with the senior citizens
Just tell them, "Dammit...leave the old folks alone"

And we know who rippin' off the neighborhood, tell them, "That BS has got to stop!"

Tell them you're sorry they can't handle it out there
But they got to take the crime off the block

And if they look at you like you're insane

And they start callin' you scarecrow and say you ain't got no brain

Or start tellin' folks that you suddenly gone lame

Or that white folks had finally co-opted your game

Or worse yet saying that you really don't know...

That's the same thing they said about me a long time

ago
And if they tell folks that you finally lost your nerve
That's the same thing they said about us, when we
said, "Johannesburg"
But I think the young folks need to know, that things
don't go both ways
You can't talk respect of every other song or just
every other day
What I'm speakin' on now is the raps about the
women folks
On one song she's your African Queen on the next
one she's a joke
And you ain't said no words that I haven't heard, but
that ain't no compliment
It only insults eight people out of ten and questions
your intelligence
Four letter words or four syllable words won't make
you important
It'll only magnify how shallow you are and let
everybody know it
And if they look at you like they think you insane
Or they call you scarecrow thinkin' you ain't got no
brain
Or start tellin' folks that you suddenly gone lame
Or that white folks have finally co-opted your game
Or you really don't know...They said that about me a
long time ago
If they finally start to tell people that you lost your nerve
That's what they said about 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
...I'm talkin' about peace

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