

Gil Scott-Heron

"We Beg Your Pardon"

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We'd like to do an idea for you that was related to the
H2OGaTe, Watergate blues
In March of 1973, we wrote the Watergate blues, and
some 17 months later, then-President Nixon resigned
But the story didn't end there, so we didn't stop there
We have prepared a sequel, and it's called, and it's
called "We Beg Your Pardon America"
We beg your pardon because the pardon you gave this
time, was not yours to give

They call it due process and some people are overdue
We beg your pardon America
Somebody said "brother-man gonna break a window,
gonna steal a hubcap, gonna smoke a joint, brother
man gonna go to jail"
The man who tried to steal America is not in jail
"Get caught with a nickel bag brother-man, get caught
with a nickel bag", says the lady on your way to get
your hair fixed
"You'll do Big Ben, and Big Ben is time"
But the man who tried to fix America will not do time

Said they're going to slap his wrists, gonna retire him
with 850 thousand dollars
And America was "shocked"
America leads the world in shocks
Unfortunately, America does not lead the world in
deciphering the cause of shock
850 thousand dollars they said and the people
protested and so they saw it like "we'll give him 200
thousand dollars"
Everybody said "OK, that's better"

I'd like to retire with 200 thousand dollars some day
San Quentin not San Clemente
Do not pass go, go directly to jail, do not collect 200
thousand dollars

We beg your pardon America
We beg your pardon because somehow the pardon did
not sit correctly

What were - what were the causes for this pardon?
Well now they had "flea bite us"
Rats bite us, no pardon in the ghetto
They had national security, but do you feel secure with
the man who tried to steal America back on the streets
again?
What are the results of this pardon though? Because
remember, when there's causes, there's results and
the results is always deeper still
We now have Oatmeal Man

Anytime you find someone in the middle,
Anytime you find someone who is tepid,
Anytime you find someone who is lukewarm,
Anytime you find someone who has been in Congress
for 25 years and no one ever heard of him,
You've got Oatmeal Man
Oatmeal Man, straddling uncomfortably, yards and
feet of barbed wire
It's hard to live in the middle all the time

Oatmeal Man, the man who said you could fit all of his
black friends in the trunk of his car and still have room
for the Republican elephant
Oatmeal Man
But there was no crime committed
Oatmeal Man says that "America, in 1975 your
president will be a 1913 Ford"
Regressive
Circle up the wagons to defend yourself from nuclear
attack
Oatmeal Man, reminiscent of 1964's AuH₂O, Gold
Water
Thank god he didn't win, but Oatmeal man didn't win
Did you vote for him? I didn't vote for him

But that's the first results, and the second would be the
Dred Rockefeller
Doubtlessly being promoted for the job he did at Attica,
43 dead and millions of Americans once again in shock
Doubtlessly being promoted for the job he did on the
streets of New York city where the pushers sell the
drugs that the government allows in the country, and
then they do time
They do life, and death or life, and death behind bars,
while William Saxby(?) says he is going to dismiss the
Lord & Furlow(?) program
And brother Richard X of Buffalo New York faces 13
hundred and 65 years - did he say one thousand three
hundred and sixty five years? - behind bars for
participating in Attica

And Rockefeller faces being the Vice President of this country
And all is calm and quiet along the white sands at San Clemente

We beg your pardon America, we beg your pardon once again
Because we found out that seven out of every ten black men behind jail, and most of the men behind jail are black
Seven out of every ten black men never went to the ninth grade
Didn't have 50 dollars and hadn't had 100 for a month when they went to jail
So the poor and the ignorant go to jail while the rich go to San Clemente

We beg your pardon America because we understand now much more deeply than we understood before
But we don't want to take the pardon back, we want to issue some more
Pardon brother Frank Willis, the Watergate security guard, he was only doing his job
Pardon H. Rap Brown, it was only burglary
Pardon Robert Vesco, it was only embezzlement
Pardon Charles Manson, it was only mass murder
And pardon us while we get sick
Because they pardoned William Calley, 22 dead, and America in shock

And we understand all the more deeply, and we beg your pardon
As unemployment spirals toward 7 percent, and it seems like 70 percent in my neighborhood
As unemployment spirals and as we watch cattlemen on TV shoot cows in the head and kick 'em in the graves while millions are starving in the Sahel(?) and Honduras and maybe even next door
We understand all the more deeply as Boston becomes Birmingham becomes Little Rock becomes Selma becomes Philadelphia, Mississippi, becomes yesterday all over again
We understand and we beg your pardon

We beg your pardon America because we have an understanding of karma
What goes around, comes around
And we beg your pardon for all of the lies and all of the people who've been ruined and who look forward to next year because they can't stand to look at this one
We beg your pardon America because the pardon you

gave this time was not yours to give

Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

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