

NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

Checking Out Me History

By John Agard

Dem tell me
Dem tell me
Wha dem want to tell me

Bandage up me eye with me own history
Blind me to my own identity

Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat
dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he
cat
But Touissant L'Ouverture
no dem never tell me bout dat

Toussaint
a slave
with vision
lick back
Napoleon
battalion
and first Black
Republic born
Toussaint de thorn
to de French
Toussaint de beacon
of de Haitian Revolution

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de
balloon
and de cow who jump over de moon
Dem tell me bout de dish run away with de
spoon
but dem never tell me bout Nanny de
maroon

Nanny
see-far woman
of mountain dream
fire-woman struggle
hopeful stream
to freedom river

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo
but dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu
Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492
but what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she
lamp
and how Robin Hood used to camp
Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole
soul
but dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

From Jamaica
she travel far
to the Crimean War
she volunteer to go
and even when de British said no
she still brave the Russian snow
a healing star
among the wounded
a yellow sunrise
to the dying

Dem tell me
Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me
But now I checking out me own history
I carving out me identity

Listen to a reading of this poem at

<https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/checking-out-me-history/>