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POLICE QUIZ

By

Niyi Osundare

A fat yellow Ford screeched to a stop
its roof one flashing ball of blinding amber
two copious cops jumped out
hugging their bulging holsters

"'scuse me,
we don't mean to be racial ... racist,
but we want to know
your name
your address
your country
your occupation"

"But why this curious quiz
even in a university campus
where I have paid to stay?"
(I thought all vital facts
were divineable by the silicon oracle
in the downtown office)

"You see,
there has been a robbery
somewhere down Keele Street"

"And so?"

"The robber ... the suspect
according to our records
is tall and slim"

"So are a million PEOPLE in Toronto"

"He has an accent"

"Oh, I see,
and that accent is
visible
a hundred yards away?"

"And BLACK"

"That does nothing
to lighten my doubt, Sir,
there are in this city
Blacks a hundred thousand"

"You'd better stop
fooling around with the LAW
we have the power
of arrest
and power
to shoot if you
appear
to resist"

Just who will arrest for good
this bigoted arrogance
whose monstrous minions
wield chains of fear and hate

Who will for ever leash
these nigger-sniffing hounds
and unlace boots
for centuries polished
with black blood?

I remember the hooded horsemen
of the South
and black bodies
dangling down the lynch tree.