

'NIGGER'



"This is A Recording"

'GET OFF YOUR DAMNED KNEES'

BY ROBERT BOWEN

"... Have you ever listened to yourself boo-hooing all over the country—screaming for justice from the very person you say won't give it to you ... ?"

IN AMERICA, the land of electronic and mechanical marvels, there ought to be a gigantic Public Address system over which all people could be reached at the exact same time. The miracle of radio and television combined would not do the job properly because, no matter how important the message, there's always someone at work or asleep or with faulty equipment. The massive system I have in mind would work on the order of the noisy civil defense claxon: you hear it wherever you are whether you want to or not. Or, like the piped-in Muzak-like music that is so popular today.

The message would be loud and clear and directed specifically toward *all* black people in America. That others would hear it is not important. Some non-blacks will react, but most will not. Of course, it would be tragic to prepare such an elaborate system and then broadcast a poor speech. Good or bad, however, it should ring out suddenly without warning something like this:

"Hey, Nigger! Get off your damned knees. Whadaya think *feet* were made for? When are you gonna stop begging for every little crumb you *don't* get? (Pause) Do you want another 400 years or more to get hip? Fool, you'd better wake up *now*! (Pause) Don't

you dare try to climb that pole and cut wires to this speaker. Big Black Brother is watching you!

"Nigger, don't you know why you ain't making no headway? Has it ever come to your thick skull that you're still in the trick bag? And it's your own damned fault. Everyday there's a new Okee-Doke that you fall for and it don't even bother you. Can't wait for some study group, committee, law, bill, injunction, dose of tear gas or updated nightstick making new knots upside your head! The only demonstration project is *you*. There you go, 'The man did this the man did that, the man didn't keep his word, the man is a demon, a beast, a devil; the man removed the crucial spheres of my father, exercised his freedom from want by taking my mother. The man don't educate my children, won't hire me, will fire me, won't let me move here or there. The man doesn't love me. Poor black me. Have you ever listened to yourself boo-hooing all over the country—screaming for a break, for justice from the very person you say *won't give* it to you?

"Put that beer can down and turn off that dumb T.V. set. The hell with the Dodgers and the Yankees, too. It's past time for you to start hitting some home runs. You know more about Joe DiMaggio than Harriet Tubman: Abe Lincoln is more of a hero to you than Toussaint. (I said 'Toussaint.' That's T-O-U-S-

S-A-I-N-T.) You ask from Jesus the things you ought to be taking for yourself. Ain't cha ever going to get tired of pleading, and begging and crying all the time? You make speeches about pride and courage, and you're afraid to act proud and you only get courageous when nobody's looking or listening. Sure, you've got a history of long-suffering and patience and hope, and all that, but ain't you sick of waiting? And what have you been waiting for? A change in the man's heart or a change in yourself? Or are you just sitting and waiting for death so you can don that long white robe and strut? Fool, why the hell don't you strut *now*?

~~Y~~ou laughed at Garvey, ran from Malcolm, and fell apart when Kennedy died. Black Power has you *shook*, and the church has you *took*. Of course you're inferior. Who but an inferior person could act so crazy? When you gonna use some of that energy you say you get from soulfood to do something worthwhile. (All right, now, I already told you 'bout that pole and them wires. I'll call a white cop . . . That's better.) Just when you should be patting a struggling black brother on the back, you're patting your big foot to some music. And when you *should* sing, you hum. No wonder you like the expression, 'Out of sight.' That's just what you are.

"You're insulted? Good—you oughta be. Fact is, you oughta be ashamed!! No . . . never mind. Don't hang your head. Come on now, get up off your knees again. Oh, stop all that sobbing and whining. You know who I'll call if you don't cut it out. There we are.

"Now, I'll be talking to ya again sometime next week. And if you don't start getting yourself to-

gether TODAY, I'll be back tonight when you're up to tricks. When you show me you feel and wanna act like men, I'll slack off a bit. But, nigger, if you keep acting up, I'll give you so much hell you'll think I'm white . . . Whadaya mean you'll listen then? Oh me, my times' up but I'll be keeping an eye on you.

"This is a recording."

