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I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.

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History is full of shameful acts. We all know this. But we don't always realize how far such acts extend or how recently they were committed. For example, in my lifetime, it was United States policy to remove Native American children from their family homes and force them into government boarding schools, or foster care. This form of deliberate cultural genocide ended in 1978 when I was in the first grade, though the damage incurred to generations of native families cannot be undone. We rarely speak of this in America. But owning up to the shame of such a policy is an important part of our national reckoning. There's a form of shame, though, that is sometimes directed at the innocent, and the aggrieved. It makes people feel like victimhood is the crime rather than oppression. The first thing that comes to mind for me, when I think of this type of victim Bourne shame, is the feeling of embarrassment that I was made to feel along with the one or two other black kids in my elementary school classrooms. Whenever the time rolled around, to discuss the era of slavery in US history. It was as though there were an unspoken acknowledgment that our ancestors, dehumanization, and suffering at the hands of slaveholding whites, was somehow their own fault. I don't want to talk about slavery was how one kid staved off those feelings. And I never spoke up. But I knew what he meant. Because I felt it too. Why didn't anybody come to our rescue? And tell us that our shame was preposterous. Didn't everything else about childhood, teach us that if I hurt you again, and again, refusing to apologize, refusing even to accept accountability for what I've done. It is not you, but I who am to blame. But shame is like that. If you accept it, even if it's not yours to accept, it becomes yours to keep, which is why today's poem by poet and monacan Indian tribe member, Karen wood is so important. I think of it as an exorcism, for the shame that victims wrongly bear for the injustices

perpetrated against them in memory of shame, by Karen wood, because it was our fault. And because we did nothing wrong, because we spoke and because we had nothing to say, because we were ignorant. And because we knew too much because we neglected our children. And because we wanted to, because we drank and because we stopped drinking, because we were industrious. And because we had no energy. Because we were young, old, fat, bony, spineless, cocky, selfish, selfless, frigid, immoral, guilty. Because we loved too much or not enough. Because we couldn't fry an egg correctly. Because the house had dust in its corners. Because we were treated disrespectfully because we were children, or women are not white, or just not enough

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because we wanted to protect them.

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