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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

love, stand, face, airport terminal, feeding, reading, kitchen, agony, poem, people, grateful, feet, speak, thankful, hands, leonard cohen, national endowment, learning, carrying, salvaging



00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith,



00:08

and this is the slow down.



00:22

Through the many human generations,



00:24

activists have risked their own comfort,



00:28

safety, and even their lives to help lead their fellow citizens further into the light of justice. abolition, suffrage for women, labor unions, free speech, civil rights, the anti war movement, women's rights, environmentalism, gay rights, anti racism. Recent injustice reminds us that we still have a long way to go. And yet these and other social movements have been pivotal to helping foster greater self determination and opportunity among the many groups of people calling this nation home. Following the news, watching video clips of peaceful protests, or spotting images of people guided by conscience to manifest in the

streets, I feel immense gratitude. I am thankful for the vast crowds the world over who marched in an attempt to bring about long overdue social change. I'm thankful for the organizers in my own community, whose efforts made it possible for me to stand up and speak out for what I believe. I'm grateful for their imaginations capable of envisioning social institutions as different and better than the ones we've grown used to. I'm grateful for their voices, their feet, their hands, their hearts, their resilience in the face of criticism,



02:04

fear and threat.



02:08

Today's poem out of Sally's kurmis you are who I love is an offering to the beautiful souls working for the health and healing of human culture. You are who I love by rsls grow my you selling roses out of a silver grocery cart. You in the park feeding the pigeons? You cheering for the bees. You with cats and your voice in the morning. Feeding cats. You protecting the river. You are who I love delivering babies nursing the sick you with henna on your feet and a gold star in your nose. You taking your medicine, reading the magazines. You looking into the faces of young people as they pass smiling and saying all right, which they know it means I see you family. I love you. Keep on you dancing in the kitchen on the sidewalk in the subway waiting for the train. Because Stevie Wonder Hector Laveau Lulu Bay, you stirring the pot of beans, you washing your father's feet. You are who I love you reciting Darwish than June feeding your heart, teaching your parents how to do the duggie counting to 10 reading your patients charts. You are who I love changing policies, standing in line for water, stalking the food pantries making a meal you are who I love writing letters, calling the senators Yoo hoo with the seconds of your body with your time here arrive on buses, on trains and cars by foot to stand in the January streets against the cool and brutal offices saying your cruelty does not speak for me.



04:27

You are who I love you struggling to see you struggling to love or find a question you better than me. You kinder and so blistering with anger. You are who I love standing in the wind, salvaging the umbrellas, graduating from school, wearing holes in your shoes. You are who I love weeping or touching the faces of the weeping you Violeta Parra. grateful for the alphabet for sound singing toward us in the dream. You carrying your brother home, you noticing the butterflies, sharing your water, sharing your potatoes and greens, you who did and did not survive you who cleaned the kitchens. You who built the railroad

tracks and roads, you who replanted the trees, listening to the work of squirrels and birds, you are who I love you whose blood was taken, whose hands and lives are taken with or without your saying yes, I mean to give you are who I love you who the borders crossed, you, whose fires you decent with rage, so in love with the earth, you writing poems alongside children, you cactus, water, Sparrow, Crow, you, my elder, you are who I love, summoning the courage, making the cobbler getting the blood drawn, sharing the difficult news. You always planting the miracles, learning to walk wherever you are learning to read wherever you are you baking the bread. You come to me in dreams, you kissing the faces of your dad, wherever you are speaking to your children in your mother's languages, to sing the birds, you are who I love, behind the library desk, leaving who might kill you crying with the love songs, polishing your shoes, lighting the candles, getting through the first day, despite the whispers sniping fail, fail, fail. You are who I love you who beat and did not beat the odds. You who knows that any good thing you have is the result of someone else's sacrifice. work. You who fights for Reparations. You are who I love you who stands at the courthouse with the sign that reads no justice. No peace. You are who I love. Singing Leonard Cohen to the snow. You with glitter on your face wearing a kilt and violet lipstick. You are who I love sighing in your sleep. You playing drums in the procession. You feeding the chickens and humming as you hem the skirt. You sharpening the pencil you writing the poem about the loneliness of the astronaut. You wanting to listen you trying to be so still you are who I love



08:21

mothering the dogs



08:23

standing with the horses. You in brightness and in darkness. throwing your head back as you laugh, kissing your hand. You carrying the bear baray from the mill and the jug of oil pressed from the olives of the trees you belong to you studying stars. You are who I love braiding your child's hair. You are who I love crossing the desert and trying to cross the desert. You are who I love working the shifts to buy books, rice, tomatoes, bathing your children as you listen to the lecture, heating the kitchen with the oven up early. up late. You are who I love learning English, learning Spanish, drawing flowers on your hand with a ballpoint pen. taking the bus home. You are who I love, speaking plainly about your pain, sucking your teeth at the airport terminal television. Every time the politicians say something that offends your sense of decency of thought, which is often you are who I love. throwing your hands up in agony or disbelief shaking your head arguing back out loud or inside of yourself. Holding close your incredulity which Yes to I love I love your

working heart. how each of its gestures tiny or big stand beside my own agony building a forest there. How fuck you becomes a love song. You are who I love carrying the signs, packing the lunches with the rain on your face, you at the edges and shores, in the rooms of quiet in the rooms of shouting in the airport terminal at the bus depot saying no. And each of us looking out from the gorgeous unlikelihood of our lives



10:46

at all, finding ourselves



10:49

here, witnesses to each other's tenderness,



10:53

which this moment



10:55

his fury is rage,



10:58

which this moment



11:00

is another way of saying you are who I love. You are who I love you and you and you are who. The slow down is a production of American Public Media, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.



11:23

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