



# theslowdown\_20200406\_20200406\_128

Wed, 9/30 8:14PM 5:00

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mama, motherhood, mother, child, felt, face, understand, american public, mothering, forget, work, slow, wiser, evolutionary, celebrates, resembled, chicken, perceptive, partnership, facets

00:06

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

00:22

motherhood changed me. First, it made me brave. Suddenly, it was easy to step in and speak up on behalf of my child. Then, motherhood made me more perceptive. I came to understand how my child felt, I found it was easier to interpret the feelings other people might be experiencing, and to anticipate what their actions might be. This must be an evolutionary necessity for mothers of all species, moving through the world while caring for offspring. As my children grew older, I could feel motherhood making me wiser. When dilemmas arose, my sense of what ought to be done began to change. Move to this place, let go of that relationship, choose that other school, trust this quiet impulse. At times, I felt I resembled my own mother more than myself. But my eagerness to guide and protect my children, can sometimes result in a clash of wills, mine against theirs. And truth be told, that's as frustrating now, as it was back when my mother was raising me. Today's poem celebrates these and other facets of mothering and being mothered. Mama said, by Candace Williams, Mama said, wake up. Mama said, it's time to get ready. Mama said you'll be late. Mama said you're closer in the dryer. Mama said. Get up. Mama said Get ready. Mama said put your clothes on. Mama said put your clothes on right now. Mama said now. Mama said Your hair is a mess. Mama said you should wear a headscarf to bed. Mama said Bring her a comb and some grease. Mama said you need a new relaxer. Mama said wash the sleep out your eyes. Mama said take the chicken out the freezer. Mama said Don't forget again. Mama said Don't forget lunch. Mama said Don't forget your gym shorts. Mama said Don't forget she'll be home late. Mama said. Don't forget your keys. Mama said Don't forget your coat. Mama said she doesn't work this hard for you to be cold. Mama said Don't forget yourself. Mama said you forgot the chicken last week. And if she has to go to Popeye's again, you aren't getting any. Mama said wait

until the car warms up. Mama said find good music. Mama said she'll never understand people who listened to prank calls on the way to work. Mama said she'll take Patti LaBelle over baby face any day of the week. Mama said, You look exhausted. Mama said your math teacher humiliates you on purpose. Mama said keep your head down and your pencil up. Mama said we work twice as hard. Mama said she works late to save for private school. Mama said you'll get in. Mama said you'll get in. Mama said you can't walk into school crying. Mama said Take a deep breath. Mama said blow your nose. Mama said there are tissues in the glove compartment. Mama said you can't be everything at everything. Mama said. You'll be there in two minutes. Mama said the summer is almost here. Mama said you'll sleep in. Mama said you should splash water on your face before you go to class. Mama said we're here. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.