

20181228_slowdown_20181228_128

Wed, 9/30 10:14AM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, star, poet laureate, begged, sour milk, market, jesus, tracy, hand, colonial rule, speaker, divine authority, man, slow, marie, strangers, armageddon, indoctrination, subjugated, breathed



00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith.



00:09

And this is the slow down.



00:23

America's official mythology is biblical. British colonists turned to the old testament to find an analogy for their own flight from colonial rule. And that tactic worked, aligning themselves with the Israelites. God's chosen people gave the revolutionary cause a sense of divine authority. slaveholders justified slavery by arguing that Christian indoctrination was a means of saving the souls of the people they subjugated. At the same time, the enslaved found proof that they deserve to be free in New Testament stories of Jesus. And those sources didn't only loom large in early American history. In 1983, Ronald Reagan actually wondered aloud if his was the generation that would live to see the battle of Armageddon, as prophesied in the book of Revelation. Even now, come winter, some superstorm some snowpocalypse may threaten to bring about the end of life as we know it. Today's poem is the star market by former New York State Poet Laureate, Marie how the speaker walks into a grocery store and finds herself amid a host of strangers as seemingly weak and vulnerable. As the men and women who begged for healing in the time of miracles. To the Speaker of the poem, their presence is at first a nuisance, but then they cause her to see herself differently. Maybe she is one of them, after all. And what about you and me? What if we, and even this young nation of ours? What if we're the

strangers in the star market to



02:24

the star market by Marie how



02:29

the people Jesus loved. were shopping at the star market yesterday. An old lead colored man standing next to me at the checkout breathed so heavily, I had to step back a few steps. Even after his bags were packed, he still stood breathing hard and Hawking into his hand. The feeble, the lame, I could hardly look at them, shuffling through the aisles. they smelled of decay, as if the star market had declared a day off for the able bodied, and I had wandered in with the rest of them. sour milk, bad meat, looking for cereal and spring water. Jesus must have been a saint. I said to myself, looking for my last car in the parking lot later, stumbling among the people who would have been lowered into rooms by ropes, who would have crept out of caves or crawled from the corners of public baths on their hands and knees, begging for mercy. If I touch only the hem of His garment, one woman thought I will be healed. Could I bear the look on his face when he wheels around?



04:03

Slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily, go to slowdownshow.org and sign up for our newsletter. The slow down is written by me. Tracy K. Smith. It is produced by Jennifer Lai, with Tracy Mumford. Our music is by Alexis quadrado. Engineering by Michael Osborne, Liz Iverson and Veronica Rodriguez. Production support by Rob Casper and Lauren D.