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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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00:05

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

00:20

I must have been in high school when I first encountered the word surreal, and I took it at face value as something unreal or impossible. What happens when fantasy infiltrates reality? I was young, sheltered and happy. And so the dark implications of the term, were hard for me to grasp. Flash forward 30 years, and, wow, I get it. I understand how perfectly necessary, it can be to resort to the dreamlike and illogical when trying to make sense of what we allow to occur in the actual world. Because so much that is terrible, and harrowing, and absolutely real. Feels like it just ought not to be possible ought not to jibe with the laws of logic, or be plausible. as fact. I now grasp how the surreal can be a powerful political tool, attempting to shake us out of our groggy acceptance, so that we can see and atone for the real damage. We and the institutions that act on our behalf are responsible for today's poem, Lake Michigan, scene three is by Daniel Berezovsky of Chicago, set in an imaginary internment camp on the shores of the lake. The poem offers a nightmarish lens on the conditions endured by real communities of immigrants, the poor, and people of color, Lake Michigan, scene three, by Daniel burzynski. The bodies are on the beach, and the bodies keep breaking, and the fight is over. But the bodies aren't dead. And the mayor keeps saying, I will bring back the bodies, I will bring back the bodies that were broken. The Broken bodies speak slowly, they walk slowly onto a beach that hangs over a fire into a fire that hangs over a city into a city of immigrants, of refugees of dozens of illegal languages into a city or every body is a border between one Empire and another. I don't know the name of the police officer who beats me. I don't know the name of the superintendent who orders the police officer to beat me. I don't know the name of the diplomat who exchanged my body for oil. I don't know the name of the

governor who exchanged my body for chemicals. The international observers tell me I'm mythological. They tell me my history has been wiped out by history. They look for the berries but all they see is the lake and it's Granger. The flowering gardens, the flourishing beach. The international observers asked me if I remember the bomb that was dropped on my village. They asked me if I remember the torches, the camps, the ruins. They asked me if I remember the river. The birds, the ghosts. They say find hope in hopefulness. Find life and death lessness locate the proper balance between living and grieving. I walk on the lake and hear voices. I hear voices in the sand and wind. I hear guilt and shame in the waves. I have my body when others are missing. I have my hands when others are severed. I hear the children of Chicago singing. We live in the blankest of times. The slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.