

20181220_slowdown_20181220_128

Wed, 9/30 10:12AM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

hips, airport, patricia smith, brims, running, poet, terminal, geometrically, vexation, celebration, grateful, pride, poem, flight, poetry, alabama, wild ride, race, girls, body



00:05

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



00:23

Back in October, I traveled to Alabama for a poetry reading. I drove to the airport, parked and made it to the terminal with plenty of time. That's when things went south. My bag was flagged for additional screening. my scarf got stuck on the security belt. My flight was delayed by an hour, my head began to race, doing airport math, then my heart started racing, I still had a chance of making my connection. But only if I managed to run through the terminal in high heels no less. wheeling my luggage beside me working up an unwelcome sweat. Which is precisely what happened. For good measure, my arrival and departure gates were as far from one another as geometrically possible. I even had to take a bus to cover that added bit of distance, out of breath, brimming with relief and vexation, I made my flight. But as if to further mock me. When I finally reached my destination, my bag had been sent to another part of the airport. Somehow, all of this took all day. I'm not as young as I used to be. Running through airports takes as much out of me now as running miles on a treadmill ever used to. I think about my body all the time. Not so much in pride, shock and surprise. Oh, my feet hurt. Ooh, there's that new knot in my back and that old kink in my neck. After three kids, my body is like a house where a raucous family has left its mark. Still, I lay in bed that night in Alabama grateful to have arrived. I lie in bed most nights grateful to have made it wherever I find myself praying. I'll keep arriving and then making it back home to my children day after day after day. Today's poem is by performance poet and Pulitzer Prize finalist Patricia Smith. I love the way it brims with total delight, pride and joy at what it means to live in and to proudly own

a body. It's a celebration of hips of Sisterhood of the great feat of staying aboard the wild ride of life. It's also an ode to black and brown girls and women who are often made to carry more than their fair share of baggage. I especially love how in the poems final lines. The speaker addresses the poet directly inviting her and all of us to get up and join in the celebration. Hip Hop guzzle by Patricia Smith. Gotta love us brown girls munching on fat swinging blue hips, decked out in shells and splashes. Lottie bringing them whoo hips. As the jukebox teases watch my sister's throat the heartbreak, inhaling baseline cracking backbone and singing through hips. boneless, we glide silent, seeping between floorboards, wrapping around the hymns and Oui, clinging like glue hips. engines, grinding, rotating smokin got a pullback, some natural minds are lost at the mere sight of ringing true hips. Gotta love us girls just Stretton down Manhattan streets, killing the menfolk with a dose of that stinking view, hips. crying about getting old. Patricia, you need to get up off what God gave you, say a prayer and start swinging to hips.



04:41

The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.