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00:06

I'm Tracy K. Smith, and this is the slow down

00:23

make us attentive to the wonders around us. When I say that, what does that make you think of caterpillars, trees, the stars in the sky, possibly. And maybe you also thought of people to the people, we tend to notice and celebrate for their remarkable achievements. But poems are also great tools with which to consider the people we often tend to overlook people whose plights and voices aren't often enough the targets of general interest or curiosity. There are lots of lives that fit that bill in America, where wealth, power and beauty are prime currency, and where the parameters for such things have been largely determined by the norms of whiteness. And so today's poem by poet, playwright, educator, and activist, Sonia Sanchez, goes a long way toward reminding us that wonder lives in all places all lives. I like the way this poem calls me out right off the bat with its title. This is not a small voice, which announces, I know what you've been taught to think. But let me tell you right now, why that's wrong. If you listen to this poem, without realizing that the speaker is talking about Black Lives, about black children in American cities, I'd be worried that you're willfully ignoring something for the poem invokes them by name latonya, Khadija shaniqua and toine, Darrell Shaquille, and for once, their names are not a litany of lack, but an inventory of love, hope, power, strength, and, yes, Wonder poems make us attentive to the wonders around us. And I'm reminded of another equally important thing that they do, which is to make us attentive to the wonders within each of us. poems reawaken us to our own inner wisdom, divinity, and might. And so, I am mindful of what it might mean to see yourself or someone like you, someone with your name, say, or the name of your classmate, or family member or friend, celebrated as marvelous, the possessor of a voice worthy of love, worthy of a poem, and so much

more. This is not a small voice, by Sonia Sanchez. This is not a small voice, you hear this is a large voice coming out of these cities. This is the voice of latonya Khadija shaniqua This is the voice of Antwan, Darrell Shaquille running over waters, navigating the hallways of our schools spilling out on the corners of our cities, and no epitaphs spill out of their river mouths. This is not a small love you here. This is a large love, a passion for kissing, learning on its face. This is a love that crowns the feet with hands, that nourishes, conceives, feels the water sails men's the children folds them inside our history, where they toast more than the flesh, where they suck the bones of the alphabet and spit out closed vowels. This is a love colored with iron and lace. This is a love initialed black genius. This is not a small voice you hear. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily, go to slowdownshow.org and sign up for our newsletter.