Strange Messengers

Patti Smith

I looked upon the book of life
Tracing the lines of face after face
Looking down at their naked feet
Bound in chains bound in chains
Chains of leather chains of gold
We knew it was wrong but we looked away
And paraded them down the colonial streets
And that's how they became enslaved
They came across on the great ships
Mothers separated from their babes
Husbands stood on the auction block
Bound in chains bound in chains
Chains of leather chains of gold
Men knew it was wrong but they looked away
And led them to toil in fields of white
As they turned their necks to a bitter landscape

Oh the people I hear them calling
Am I not a man and a brother
Am I not a woman and a sister
History sends us such strange messengers
They come down through time
To embrace to enrage
And in their arms even stranger fruit
And they swing from the trees
With their vision in flames
Ropes of leather ropes of gold
Men knew it was wrong but they looked away
Messengers swinging from twisted rope
As they turned their necks to a bitter landscape
Oh the people I hear them calling
Am I not a man and a brother
Am I not a woman and a sister
We will be heard we will be heard

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