

Why I Could Not Accept Your Invitation

By Naomi Shihab Nye

Besides the fact that your event
is coming up in three weeks
on the other side of the world
and you just invited me now,
your fax contained the following phrases:
action-researched oriented initiative
regionally based evaluation vehicles
culture should impregnate all different sectors
consumption of cultural products
key flashpoints in thematic area.
Don't get me wrong, I love what you are doing,
believing in art and culture, t
here, in the country next to the country
my country has recently been devastating i
n the name of democracy,
but that is not the language I live in
and so I cannot come.
I live in teaspoon, bucket, river, pain,
turtle sunning on a brick
Forgive me. Culture is everything
Right about now. But I cannot pretend
a scrap of investment in the language
that allows human beings to kill one another
systematically, abstractly, distantly.
The language wrapped around 37,000,
Or whatever the number today,

Dead and beautiful bodies thrown into hole

Without any tiny, reasonable goodbye.