

The Tiny Journalist

Naomi Shihab Nye

Boa Editions (Apr 16, 2019)

Softcover \$17.00 (128pp)

978-1-942683-73-5

Written to honor youth activists Janna Jihad Ayyad and her cousin Ahed Tamimi, Naomi Shihab Nye's *The Tiny Journalist* uses poetry to blend stories and speak truth to power about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Amid unfathomable suffering and sorrow, the book responds to a hammer of apathy, trauma, and violence with allegiance to a higher principle: universal human dignity.

From the first poem, "Morning Song," Shihab Nye uses questions to create an implicit call and response:

*They pretended not to see us.
They came at night with weapons.
What was our crime? That we liked
respect as they do? That we have pride?*

Such straightforward language carries vast implications that highlight the tension undergirding daily conditions. Every question also implies the power of silence, whether it's unanswerable or simply ignored by a public who "won't cry because the dead ones weren't someone / they knew and loved."

The collection doesn't just look at Palestine, but considers what larger networks uphold systemic violence. Often concerned with the disconnect between declarations of moral authority and horrific actions undertaken in its name, these poems undermine the idea of easy righteousness or neutrality. Following the poems' complex arcs between insiders and outsiders, horror and banality, is both harrowing and mesmerizing.

In "America Gives Israel Ten Million Dollars a Day," a demonstrating rabbi is asked to "just hold their own thoughts for a moment / and imagine what we feel like?" and answers, "I don't know. I don't know / if we can imagine it." His words come to apply to every bystander of the human tragedy of Israel and Palestine. *The Tiny Journalist* addresses a crisis of empathy with powerful vulnerability and imagination and has the power to change brave readers.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (July/August 2019)

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