

Tell them (they have names)

and when they turn the bodies over

To count the number of closed eyes. And they tell you 800'000: you say no. that was my uncle. He wore bright coloured shirts and pointy shoes.

2 million: you say no. that was my aunty.
her laughter could sweep you up like
The wind to leaves on the ground.

6 million: you say no. that was my mother.
her arms. the only place i have ever
Not known fear.

3 million: you say no. that was my love.
We used to dance. Oh, how we used to dance.

Or 147: you say no. that was our hope. Our future. The brains of the family.

And when they tell you that you come from war: you say no. I come from hands held in prayer before we eat together.

When they tell you that you come from conflict: you say no. I come from sweat.

On skin. glistening. From shining sun.

When they tell you that you come from genocide: you say no. i come from the first smile of a new born child. tiny hands.

when they tell you that you come from rape: you say no. and you tell them about every time you have ever loved.

tell them that you are from mother carrying you on her back. until you could walk.

until you could run. until you could fly.

tell them that you are from father holding you up to the night sky. full of stars. and saying look, child. this is what you are made of. from long summers. full moons. flowing rivers. sand dunes.

you tell them that you are an ocean that no cup could ever hold.

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poet