

## Kay Ulanday Barrett

2013 TJFP Panelist

*Sick, Disabled, and Transgender community exist in the margins. Moreover if you are a Trans Person of Color, our bodies are under constant brutality by public assistance, police, medical industrial complex, and our very own families and peers. Our existence is deemed a pitiful one by our able-bodied Queer and Transgender community as we are seen as less viable to be “active” in the harsh capitalist norms of political, social, and sexual norms. How we receive resources and funding are harshly impacted in how we maintain our sustenance and seek joy.*

*The following poem, “You are SO Brave” is written in the form of a cento. A Cento is basically a found poem that is cut and pasted together from sayings, conversation, lines, and paragraphs of other people not the author. Basically, the entire poem has none of my own words, but is comprised of conversation and excerpts directed toward those who are in the resilience of the Sick and Disabled Transgender People of Color community. Please read this slowly. Imagine this in your daily bloodstream and heart. Imagine your erasure. Imagine the level of self-advocacy it takes to exist. Imagine how the acts to embrace trans justice, economic justice, disability justice, and racial justice are inextricable to seeking self-determination. Understand that building networks and community care that explore our whole selves is a true struggle.*

### You Are SO Brave: A Cento

*"& those scars i had hidden wit smiles & good fuckin lay open & i dont know i dont know any more tricks i am really colored & really sad sometimes & you hurt me"*  
— Ntozake Shange



Kay Ulanday Barrett,  
2013 TJFP Panelist

What happened? Aw, sweetie, here, let me get that for you. What do you mean “No thank you,” You don’t want my help? Some people are ungrateful, I was helping YOU. You are SO brave! *Please step on the scale, Please step on the scale, Please step off the scale.* You are SO brave! I’ve never seen someone one on a dance floor/protest move like that! What a pimp! Can I touch your cane? Does it hurt?

**“People with disabilities are often seen as “flawed” beings whose hope of normalcy rests in becoming more like non-disabled people or on becoming “cured.” —Sins Invalid.** (When will you get better?) Don’t worry everything will be normal soon. If you just try hard enough, you will heal. If you just pray hard enough you will heal. (Have you tried acupuncture? water therapy? meditation?) If you take these herbs enough, you can be like you were - better, normal. Why are you walking so slow? This is the city of the hustle, son. Buck up. If you can’t speed up, leave.

**Dear \_\_\_\_\_; I understand that you have accessibility needs and we as a queer progressive organization love (love love love mmmlove) your work but we unfortunately, we find your requests to be unrealistic. We understand that you are a queer and transgender and person of color and with limited income, but we cannot fund you at this time. Please do send us samples of your work so that we may distribute them to our**

participants FOR FREEEEEEEEEEEE! Dear [insert assigned-at-birth name you no longer identify with that makes you want to cut yourself at every syllable]: It has come to our attention that you are 100% disabled. You cannot work at all. Disabled people don't work at all. They should never work. Don't even consider working. (Does it hurt still?)  
Classification: No prolonged standing, walking, steel pin impacted osteotomy aiken mcbride. Constant deviance in the foot based on affected use. Constant deviance. Constant deviance. Constant deviance. Cane usage to support impediment and prolonged limp. Oh my! Look.... at that hair! Don't you have a boyfriend to come to physical therapy with you?

**“Seen as ‘flawed’ beings whose hope of normalcy rests in becoming more like non-disabled people or by becoming ‘cured.’”** “For the report we’re going to need to see some ID, [insert loud guffaw here] that cannot possibly be you. you were attractive once! What happened? Please step on the scale. So, you were attacked?  
Whatdidyoudotomotivatetheattack? What exactly does L G B T Q mean? Well, Ma’am, we have to use the biological sex it says on paperwork. It’d be nice if you wore some lipstick, maybe some make up? It might make this whole process easier. Does it hurt still? Hasn’t it been years now? Why aren’t you better? Based on your old life, don’t you want to be more like me? Heeeeeeeeey! Do you have a fundraiser? **I don’t know any disabled people personally**, but we can raise funds to help YOU, because we think YOU deserve it. This is the city of the hustle, son. Buck up.

**YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING!**

Give me that, you don’t know how to take care of yourself! **Ugh, you are so slow. It’s hard to imagine you could do anything yourself at all. You are so pathetic!** (Does it hurt? Still?)

Yo homey, we’re all going to the club! Should be some cuties there. Oh, yeah.... yeah, there are stairs dude. Oh yeah, sorry dude, I forgot. The march is 2.5 miles long, maybe you can meet us at the rally? Aw, look it that little boy with the cane! Why do I have to get up?! #^@ **You want my seat faggot?!** So... (long exhales) you were attacked? Why do I have to get up, chink? Hey! I’m talking to you! Do you uh-speak tha-english? **He doesn’t even look disabled.** If you have any concerns around safety at this event/ conference/protest, you should really bring up these concerns with this cisgender rad skinny able-bodied person who confuses wellness work for **everybody gets better work!** Wait (laughs) is that supposed to be a girl? Awww, you look so cute when you dance! Let me take a picture of you holding your back - show the cane! **SHOWWW THE CAAANE!**  
What did you do for someone to attack you? You must’ve done something to provoke it. Please step off the scale. You know if you lose weight, you’ll be healed right? **We’ll help you because we think you deserve it, not like some people with disabilities**, the ones who drool and make a fuss. Constant deviance. Constance deviance.

Constant deviance.  
(You’ll be normal soon, won’t you? Won’t you?) It’s not far, just a few blocks. Aw, I know you’re in pain, but you can make it, dude. What do you mean “No thank you?”  
**you don’t want my help?!** Please step on the scale, Please step on the scale, Please step off the scale.