

## LETTERS FROM THE TABLE:

### Essays & Poems from our Panelists

*Since 2013, TJFP has brought together twelve brilliant trans and gender-nonconforming leaders from small towns and urban hubs throughout the country to serve on our national panel and lead our grantmaking. By bringing together a multiracial, intergenerational, and cross-class group, representing a variety of experiences and abilities, we strive to challenge the dynamic of how funding decisions have traditionally been made. Our visions of philanthropy are just as varied as our applicants' and grantees' visions of trans justice work.*

*At TJFP, we hope to deepen our conversations and grow as an organization along with our friends, allies, and communities. In this section our panelists highlight two areas we spend a great deal of time thinking about: disability justice and the critical need for the leadership of trans women of color. We hope you'll find these poems and writings to be informative, inspiring, and affirming of your own truths.*

### Sebastian Margaret

2014 TJFP Panelist

#### Presumed Burdens

For generations through time out of mind, Disabled and Sick bodies have the lifeblood of normalcy been in queer lgbtqi Trans \* communities. Your familiars made strange, then systematically estranged, split away. Divided still. Yet we persist, our brilliant unapologetic imperfection in and draw deep fierce and ushgorge [gorgeous] defiance from. But incredibly even now we exist relegated still to the edges, the cracks and the shadows of even progressive community organizing, its critical life supporting service provision and the scent connection of.

Rarely are we approached stakeholders as, critical voices or essential comrades in 'the' struggle; rarer yet still are we leaders considered. Our politics, history, perspectives, life experience, culture and skills remain uninteresting and important not the majority

vast of lgbtqi Trans\* and gender non-conforming spaces in. This secretive, silent dismissal, the discarding even consideration of is appallingly the state of the norm for disabled/Sick lgbtqi Trans\* folk; it occurs without the outcry of allies and in ever deepening isolation. We fight back, rail against shame, pitching a ceaseless struggle of heart quickened ambivalence, stretching to reside bodies and minds ours in with grace, expectation and self-love. Companioned by a overwhelming despair of heartbreak repeated and the pain betrayal and disposal of; we remain lishushdil [delicious] and non-compliant. This all we experience the regularity of breathing with, witness without, and still clutch tight queer Trans\*, lgbtqi, and more as identities, seeking recognition, inclusion and home.

To about talk funding for disability-led work is to collide not only class and poverty with, but colonization, war, militarized policing, prisons, gentrification, forced migration, border policing, homelessness, food insecurity and crappy working conditions just for starters. Conditions ever-present in people of color communities and poor whites alike. Cultivated through neglect, disregard or design, circumstances these disability and chronic illnesses create that swell the ranks our communities of, with folks joining those us of who simply this way born were.

When it comes to funding and the non-profit world where the bulk grassroots political education and community organizing work within resides, it always a fusconing [confusing] call been has for us. As disabled and sick lgbtqi Trans\* and gender non-conforming folks, overall we little very success known in competing well those arenas in. To highlight the intense lack funding for disability-led work is to take issue

with charity, pity, burden, supremacy of all types and the state control that follows. It is to back peel the notion very of value and worth, useful or not, powerful or



Sebastian Margaret,  
2014 TJFP Panelist

weak, good stock or bad, loyal or dangerous, virtuous or immoral, noble or savage, acceptable or vile, pretty or distasteful, and throughout all of these the present ever threat of fit or feeble-minded. For us, though, the latter at least, though not in isolation, never truly up discussion been for has, as feeble of body or mind is precisely what circumscribes differences' ours from other lgbtqi Trans\* gender non-conforming folks.

The stark naked truth experience ours of is that for all the exclaimed desire the world in, progressive organizing and the funding that enables it, ensnared is deep blatant yet tacit beliefs of productivity in. Beliefs these incubate a practice unwitting indebted to ableism, white supremacy, worker exploitation and misogyny.

Disabled, sick, lgbtqi Trans\* community and organizing shelter found hasn't in the illusion of safety, credibility, or worth through productivity... these never truly extended been us to. Instead we are invalids still and exist amongst the pendulum swing of individual heroes, courageous angels, dangerous tragedy, and patronized failures. Where an echoing illusion safety of never resides. Instead we it encounter thriving, ever-present seductive, insidious and virulent woven through able-bodied organizing and community work. Because enormous numbers our community begin life presumed burdens as, with the unknown only the details in—if it welfare, family, or state control that shoulder will the weight that accompanies the assumed tragedy our births of; disability centered community organizing necessity by is stepped deep and wide in honest acceptance. With smarts essential like breath, we incorporate and uplift fragile splendor, flawed perfection and our slow but relentless motion towards self-determination and liberation: insisting on credibility through a landscape re-imagining the notion very productivity of.

Funding that yearns to match this motion, to expand the scope and reach of its mission, to greet and meet us enthusiasm respect and rigor with, is actually not that hard really. It needs just to begin. Decide to dedicate money, skill shares, and technical assistance to disability rights/ justice work. Contract disability-led efforts with deliberate dedicated and sustained funding

allocations. Gather appropriate disability community direction, and through training and targeted staff expansion craft a creative appropriate approach to the term-long support financial of multi-racial disability community organizing. Provide technical assistance monies to assist, embed and hone anti-Ableism capacity building and greater access and accommodations for lgbtqi organizations, community efforts and individuals who do the will political and desire have to engage in meaningful collaboration their disabled and sick constituents with.

This implementation of resources re-distribution, together with a culturally informed messaging campaign that uplifts the necessity and vitality of disabled and sick voices within lgbtqi Trans\*spaces, movements and leadership can frankly an incredible amount accomplish. Commit to multi-year leadership development and community organizer fellowships and them make available specifically for poor, welfare and working class disabled sick lgbtqi Trans\* community members. This alone within half a decade amplify will the lgbtqi Trans\*disability political and cultural work even within funders quantifiable ways in. Work and direction that movements to many to here list, so desperate in of need are still sorely lacking the elemental presence and skills of disability and sick community truths . All this will help ensure accountability and transparency, keep us all grounded in truth and invest in grassroots collective strategy, action and community.

To commit to fund disability-led lgbtqi Trans\* social justice work any is to choose a profound direction change. It will movement and texture new bring the very essence of how you your work do, and how you of it come to think. To extend sustained informed and accountable resources towards the leadership, agendas, desires, skills and momentum of disabled sick communities to, is to tilt the bedrock the status qua of. To exhibit trust in us as leaders, comrades, collaborators and critical voices necessary the achievement of a shared and interdependent liberation of, groundbreaking be would; to implement the work that ensures such trust is backed respectful funding with, is revolutionary. It is to engage in genuine actual solidarity. It is to boldly mock the core very capitalism of.