

Breaking Silence

By Alice Doyle

The universe honours brave.
Today, if you share who you are,
the costs of disability,
the costs of exclusion
or the barriers to your employment
for the first time,
the second or the tenth,
we will witness your courage
and hear your words.
Being who we are
in a an ever tightening
neuronormative world
is living courage.

There are so many people,
spaces and places that seek
to diminish our unique voices,
to control and define the boundaries
in which we exist,
the way in which we live,
to determine the limits of our needs,
the level of supports,
the finance available or lack thereof,
the levels of accessibility
that could enable us
or disable us to participate
fully and easily in all parts of life.

We are women.
We are disabled women
and non-binary people.
Our needs matter.
Our autonomy matters.
We can determine our own truth.
If or when we need support, we can ask.
Supports need to meet us where we are.
They need to be appropriate, timely,
available and easily accessible.
Let us name the supports we need.
Let us speak about
the cost of disability and gender,
about parenting, disability and gender
about enabling financial independence
for disabled women and non-binary people.

Let us share our lived experiences,
name the obstacles we meet,
the systemic barriers,
the infringements on our liberty,
the fences we must climb
or tear down just to be.
Let us name the everyday invisible sufferings,
the tasks that challenge us,
the barriers that fence us out
of employment and of full participation in life.
Let us name the words that harm us,
gaslight us and reduce our beings
to depersonalised, voiceless statistics.

For in silence, we suffer invisibly.
So, let us name the effects of poverty
and the opportunities for change.
For when named,
we see them more clearly.
And when seen,
a new beginning becomes possible,
change becomes imaginable
and a different future
can be envisioned for all.